

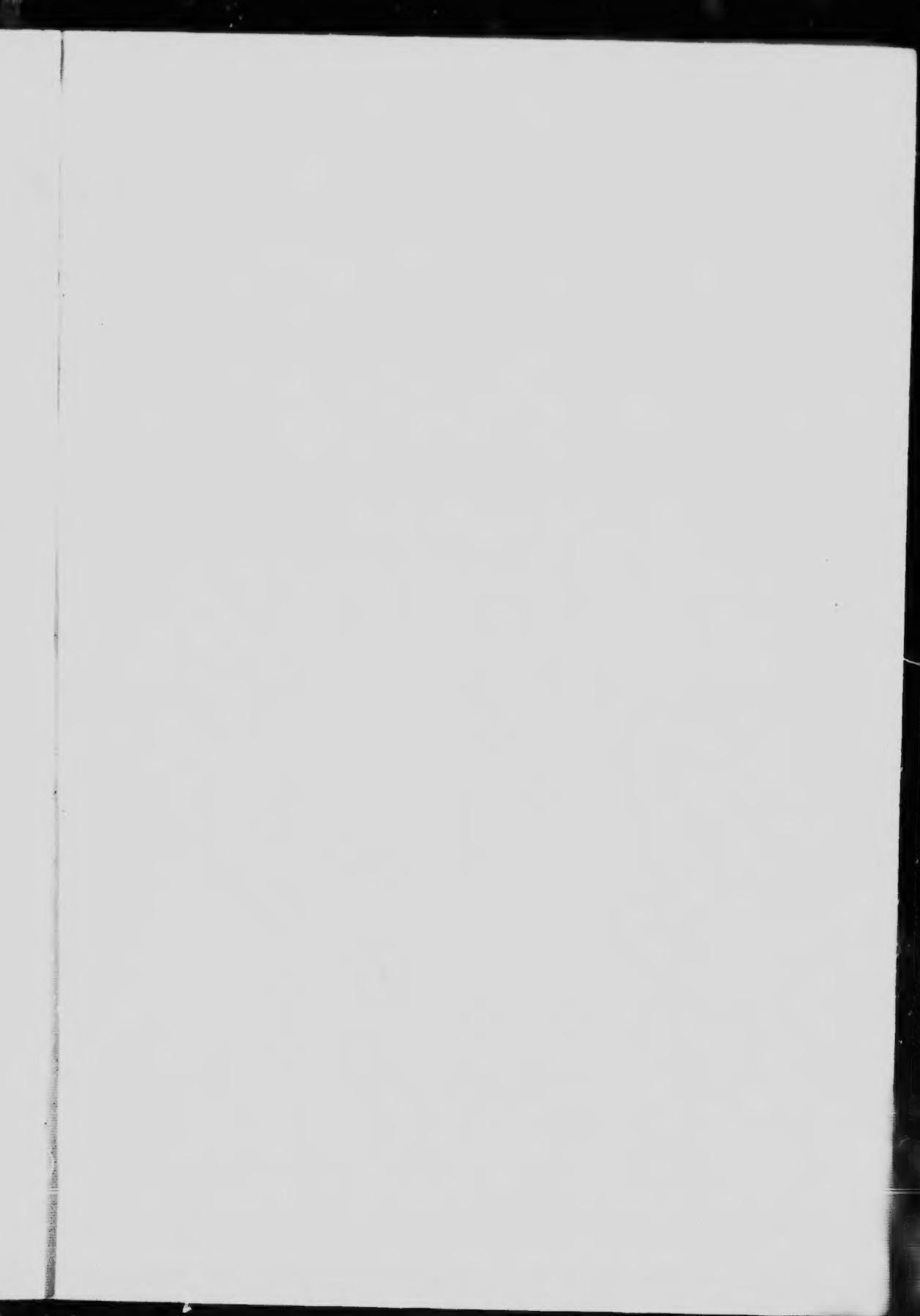


B MAID OF ONTARIO

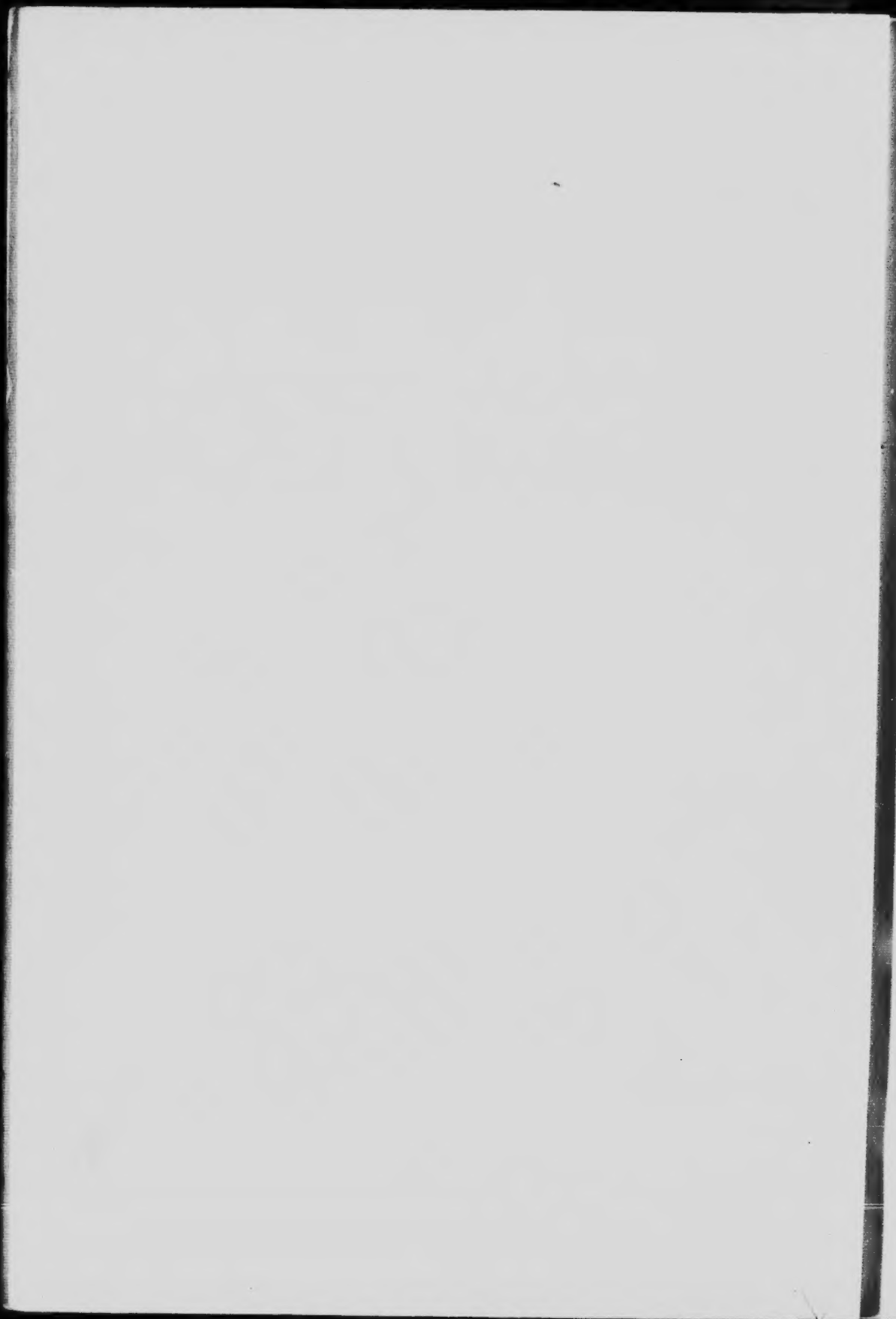
A STORY OF BUFFALO -
TORONTO AND THE
FENIAN RAID OF 1866.

JAMES LEROY NIXON





A Maid of Ontario.



A MAID OF ONTARIO.

**A Story of Buffalo, Toronto, and
the Fenian Raid of 1866.**

BY
JAMES LEROY NIXON

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A MAID OF ONTARIO.

CHAPTER I.

MARIE MEREDITH.

SHE stood at the turning of the lane, green-
ing under the influence of the warm, early
May showers and the first genial rays of a tardy
Northern sun, just where this approach to the
farm buildings branched from the narrow, dusty
country road.

From where she stood on the somewhat
elevated plateau where the original owner of the
farm had elected to place his white clapboarded
residence, the land fell away in gently undulating
terraces to where, through the intervals between
the grove-like groups of forest growth the waters
of the lake flashed in waves of silver under the
fading glory of the departing sun, its currents
stimulated to activity as the race-like channel of
the river was reached, already appearing to feel
the magnetic influence of the great cataract miles
below.

Standing there at the summit of the rise of
ground which could not by any stretch of the

imagination he termed a hill, her lithe, graceful figure clearly drawn against the background of dark evergreens forming the northern boundary of the lane, by the white, clinging gown she wore ; the heavy masses of her richly auburn hair glistening in coils of dull gold at the back of a shapely head, the chance passer could not well have resisted the inclination to pause and regard with wonder and admiration a picture which might have stepped down from one of the great gold frames of the Queen's gallery at Windsor and Borne across the sea have been set up as a model of unconscious royalty at the portal of this rural Ontario home.

Had he been so careless of convention as to thus presume, he would at once have dismissed the picturesque idea, and vowed that no brighter, more expressive blue eyes, vividly glowing cheeks or luscious red lips could be found in all the Dominion than those possessed by Marie Meredith.

But had he been critically observing he might have decided that the carmine of the cheek was somewhat heightened, and the flashing of the blue eyes noticeably emphasized by some strong excitement. Had he been even more discerning he would surely have noted that the strong white hand, as it rested upon the open gate, was clenched until the almond-shaped nails cut deeply into the tender palms, and the blue veins stood out upon the faultlessly chiseled arms from which the flowing sleeves of the gown had fallen

away, until they served to disfigure what would otherwise have been a perfect contour.

Had all this failed to wholly remove doubt that the charming figure before him was flesh and blood, he would have been fully convinced when, held there by irresistible charm, he saw the tempting lips move and caught the words poured forth in the vehemence of sudden and impetuous passion :

"They lie ! They know not what they say when they accuse Harold of disloyalty to the Queen. The cowards, to say such things when he is not here to hurl the cruel falsehood back in their teeth !"

She stamped her slippered foot in fine rage, and struck the rough top of the gate with her clenched hand with such force that there was a crimson stain upon the white flesh when it was again raised.

The pain appeared to give her pleasure, for the sternness of the fair face was somewhat relaxed and the tracings of a smile lurked about the corners of the before tightly compressed lips as she wiped away the blood with a fine cambric handkerchief, and whispered, half mockingly, half playfully :

"Shed in defence of his honor ; would he do as much for me ?"

Billy Wood, the farm boy, came whistling up the road, driving home the cows, and she stepped aside to allow them to enter the lane.

Watching the sleek cattle as they passed, pat-

ting now one then another as they turned towards her to snatch a bite of the crisp, fresh grass of the lane, the frown had nearly disappeared from the girl's fair face by the time Billy's five feet of boyish humanity came in range of vision, about a near turn of the road, but suddenly became stern again as she recognized the tune he was not unmelodiously but somewhat boisterously whistling.

"For shame, Billy ! That's not a proper air for you to be practicing upon. Where did you learn it ?"

Billy Wood's face brightened as he recognized his questioner. He pulled off his cloth cap, revealing a shock of hair even more vividly red than that of the girl who had reprimanded him, leaned against the gate-post, and as he replaced one of his suspenders which had slipped from his somewhat sloping shoulder, replied, unabashed :

"At the hotel at Bertie, Miss Meredith."

"What were you doing at the hotel, Billy ? Did uncle know you went ?"

"Sure, he did ; didn't he send me himself to take Gregg's post maul home ?"

"Oh, did he ? Well, he didn't tell you to stop long enough to pick up that disgraceful song, did he ?"

"No, I can't say he did," returned Billy slowly, dropping his head, but regarding Miss Meredith somewhat mirthfully from the corner of his eye. "You see I had to take the maul around to the woodshed, and when I come back by the

parlor the winder was open an' some fellers was in there a-singin', and when I caught that tune I jest couldn't get by. Do you know the words, Miss Meredith? It starts off:

"O, Paddy dear, and did you hear,
The news that's going round?"—

"There, that's enough!" Marie Meredith held up her hand deprecatingly and sought to speak sternly, though she was forced to turn her head to hide the merriment of her eyes, a fact that was not unobserved by her uncle's far from stupid farm hand.

"But don't you think it's a pretty tune, Miss Meredith?" he asked, not a suggestion of mirth disturbing the serene gravity of his freckled face.

"I do. 'Tain't so solemn like as 'God Save the Queen,' though that's well enough when there's a lot of voices together. Seems more like 'Yankee Doodle,' that feller from the States was playin' on his fiddle the other night down at Fort Erie."

"I don't object to the tune so much, Billy," returned the young woman, "but the sentiment is bad. It's treason, Billy."

"What's treason? The tune?"

"No, the words. They are an affront to the Queen, and are treasonable when uttered on British soil."

"But I'm Irish, an' who has a better right to sing 'The Wearing of the Green' than an Irishman I'd like to know?"

Billy Wood was evidently in an argumentative mood, which Miss Meredith had long ere

this discovered was about his normal condition. She could be equally persistent :

"Yes, you're Irish, sure enough," she returned, "but you are an English subject as well, and you should have more respect for your sovereign than to give expression to the sentiments contained in that song. I don't like it."

She could be diplomatic as well as severe. She knew that no living person held her in higher esteem than the shock-headed boy who had come to James Meredith's house one night in the dead of winter three years before, ragged, half-starved, asking for a night's lodging ; had been taken in at her earnest personal request, and as a result of the same influence, had been given a comfortable home ever since. Her expressed wish was a law to friendless Billy Wood. She spoke seriously now.

Billy kicked up the dirt of the wagon track with the toe of his boot. To give up the privilege of exercising his vocal chords on the tune which had so enraptured his musical senses was far more of a sacrifice than Marie Meredith could comprehend. In fact it is doubtful if she realized that it was a sacrifice. To him it was only the rhythmic jingle of the deftly arranged notes which caught his fancy. In her case, loyal as she was to the queen mother across the ocean, the sentiment expressed was repugnant, and that fact overshadowed every other consideration.

But Billy was loyal to his sovereign as well.

He had no thought of debating the matter after knowing her wishes.

"I won't sing it again," he said.

"Thank you, Billy; I'd rather you wouldn't."

He started along after the cows which had been nothing loth to improve the opportunity afforded by their herdsman's delay, to crop the tender verdure of the lane, but turned hesitatingly towards her after a few steps :

"You wouldn't mind my whistling it when I'm working in the back lot, would you ?" he inquired.

She could not deny him that.

"Not at all," she returned, really glad that he had asked.

"It's a mighty pretty tune," he cheerfully reiterated as he moved with alacrity to drive the cows into the night yard.

It was not really to be wondered that the melodious notes of the famous Hibernian air had grated harshly upon the somewhat overstrung senses of this true-blue English girl, for had it not been because of aspersions cast upon the loyalty of the man she loved and expected some day to marry, that she had quit the dinner table, angry and deeply aggrieved before the meal was completed, and had come out there in the lengthening shadows of the evergreens to stamp her British foot in furious wrath at those who had dared to utter the wicked libel, and wound her own tender flesh in the excess of her aroused passion.

Yes, Marie Meredith was English, at least on

the father's side, though the azure eyes and mop of bronze gold hair came as the dower from her whom twenty-five years before George Meredith had found a beautiful flower blooming amid the green hills which were reflected back from the mirror surface of the lakes of Killarney, and had transplanted to his ancestral acres.

Born in the old family mansion of the Merediths, almost within sight of the constantly hovering smoke-clouds of Manchester, Marie had been only a year old when George Meredith's Irish rose had paled and drooped in the smoke-laden air of industrial England, and pining for the green braes and limpid cairnes of Killarney, had fallen into that sleep which knows no waking, leaving the wealthy factory owner poorer than his humblest spool-tender, with only Marie and Douglas, five years her senior, to spread balm with their tiny hands upon his deeply wounded heart.

But stolid and undemonstrative as was the eldest son of the house of Meredith, the death of his wife made him moody and despondent, unfitted him for his business, impaired his mind, and finally left him a physical wreck and a mental ruin. Financial losses had come during the last days of his attempted business activity, and after George Meredith had been placed in an asylum for the mentally unsound, and the estate had been administered, it was found that the worse than orphaned children would have only about two hundred pounds each, which would scarcely

pay for their care until they were able to look out for themselves.

But with brotherly devotion James and Wallace Meredith had assisted the task, and while Douglas had been carried away to one uncle's home in Edinburgh, James, bringing with him the baby Marie, had turned his course toward the western continent, had lived for a time in Toronto, had been fairly successful, and finally, three years before the time at which our story opens, had occupied the farm in Lower Ontario, and was passing his declining years in the peace and comfort to which an active life and generous disposition made him entitled.

But the one secret of his brother's mental misfortune had been religiously guarded by James Meredith, and the fair girl, who had become as dear to him as his own daughter, had no suspicion that George and that other Marie Meredith did not lie side by side in the little churchyard cemetery just beyond the din of Manchester's million of spindles.

It was far better, James Meredith reasoned, that the bright presence which fate had sent into his own childless home, should not be dimmed by the knowledge of the father's terrible affliction. He was dead to the world, why not better to have him thought so in fact by the daughter who had never realized that she had been clasped in a parent's loving arms.

It was the memorable spring of 1866. That fierce conflict which for four long years had raged

from the Potomac to beyond the turgid Father of Waters, had aroused intense interest in the Dominion, for it had not only proven the asylum of many a frightened refugee, both white and black, fleeing from the scourge of war, but sentiment had been strong for one or the other members of this quarreling family, during all the time that the advantage rested, first with one, then with the other, of the opposing forces.

Canada as a whole was undoubtedly well pleased with the final result of that sanguinary conflict, for as a neighbor she would doubtless feel more secure in her own rights, with the cool-blooded Northern disciple of peace camped just across the boundary line than were the fiery Southron, flushed and ambitious from the heat of victory, to seize control of the government at Washington.

Yet scarcely had the thunderous roar of the big guns on the James river ceased ere the echoes of the conflict came surging Northward, in the character of ugly rumors that under the guise of a revolutionary movement for the freeing of Ireland from British domination, thousands of her riff-raff of both armies, flood-wood from the waves of civil war, were turning their thoughts to venture of conquest in that fair country above the Great Lakes and the swift St. Lawrence.

Into the cities, villages and country homes all along the border from Quebec westward to Fort William, these troublesome rumors obtruded their ugly heads, and while those who possessed undy-

ing faith in the protection of royal power, scoffed at the idea of invasion, much less successful pillage, there were many friends of Ireland who saw in the reported Fenian uprising a somewhat similar wave of deliverance to that which had swept the Southern slave to freedom.

There were many Irishmen, especially in Lower Canada, who, heart and soul with the Fenian brotherhood in its proposed plan of Irish liberation, were in communication with the leading spirits of the revolutionary movement, and were ready when the auspicious moment arrived, to lend all the aid possible to the consummation of their long cherished hopes.

While this condition of sentiment was not unknown to the loyal subjects of the Crown, for a freedom of expression was permitted altogether out of keeping with monarchical methods, the loyalists were so largely in the ascendant that little importance was attached to the more bold than discreet display of rebellious tendencies, or the confidence shown by the Hibernian element in the reliability of the rumors.

It had been the result of a dinner-table discussion of the possibilities of a Fenian war and reference to the loyalty or disloyalty of Harold Grattan, whom Marie had promised to marry in September, which had unpleasantly disturbed the Meredith dinner.

Lieutenant Upton, of the Queen's Own, had been a guest, having driven out to the Meredith farm from Fort Erie, where he had been called from Toronto on business.

Upton had been a frequent caller at the Mere-

dith's before their removal from the city, and occasionally since. Whether these visits were prompted by simple friendship for the family, or by a stronger regard for the fairest member of it, perhaps no one besides the young soldier could have definitely told.

Both James Meredith and his wife entertained a suspicion, and in the seclusion of their private bedroom, where confidences of husband and wife are most free of expression, had verbally shared the hope that their ward would not allow such a valuable prize to slip through the meshes of her matrimonial net.

Even after Marie's engagement had been sanctioned by their somewhat reluctant approval, they had not entirely banished the hope of a more desirable alliance; for they looked with far more favor upon the dashing Queen's officer, with a good fifty thousand in his own right, than upon the supposedly briefless Buffalo lawyer, who had selected a profession already over-crowded, and whose occasional somewhat irreverent compliments to Her Majesty, if reports were true, were not wholly indicative of governmental devotion.

In that dinner-table conversation the subject of the Fenian raid had come up, of course, for it had become a matter of general gossip.

Whether it was design or accident, no one but Lieut. Upton could decide, for it was he who first connected the name of Harold Grattan with the subject under discussion. And still it came about quite naturally.

"What has become of Grattan?" Upton sud-

denly asked in a pause of the conversation, which had up to this time been pleasantly animated, and not altogether complimentary to the alleged leaders of the rumored Fenian movement, for there was no discord of opinion among those at the table.

"He's usually up to Toronto once a week on that railroad claim case he's prosecuting," Upton continued, with a slightly more penetrating glance at Marie than the occasion seemed to warrant; "but Sayles said yesterday he hadn't had even a line from him in three weeks."

Meredith and his wife exchanged a quick, significant glance.

"He has been unusually busy," was Marie's comment, a conscious blush deepening the carmine of her cheek, as it always had the unpleasant habit of doing when the name of her lover was thus unexpectedly borne to her ears.

"So?" Upton was unrelenting, "Sayles said he was worried somewhat about his case and ran down to Buffalo on Saturday to find out what had become of his lawyer."

"Well?"

Marie felt more interest than she cared to show.

"He went home mad as a March hare."

"Didn't he find Grattan?" asked Meredith.

"No."

Lieut. Upton's eyes again rested upon Marie

Meredith's face with intentness in which lurked a suggestion of triumph.

"Why not?" asked Meredith, with awakening interest.

"Because his office was locked, and Sayles says there was a card pinned on the door on which was written: 'Out of town; return uncertain.' Of course that was a little slip of Grattan's English, for there's no possibility he's gone for good. I suppose he really meant that he couldn't fix a date for the reopening of his office."

"He was suddenly called out of the city," Miss Meredith said, in a slightly apologetic tone. "Harold wrote me," she continued, turning to Mrs. Meredith, a woman of fifty, with a benign countenance, which beamed good nature for all, "that he would be away for several days. Mr. Sayles is alarmed about his claim without good reason."

"Oh, I told him Grattan was the last man to neglect a case," interposed Upton with alacrity. He would prefer not to arouse enmity for himself in the heart of the fair woman opposite. At the same time he was apparently intent on creating a bad impression relative to the absent man, for he continued, directing his remark this time to Meredith:

"It wasn't so much Grattan's absence in itself that displeased Sayles as the cause attributed by other members of the bar for his attorney's apparent neglect."

"They don't—no, they surely cannot attri

bute it to drink?" said Mrs. Meredith, and Marie frowned, but otherwise appeared not to notice.

"Oh, no, nothing like that," returned Upton, quickly. "Harold is noted among his associates for his abstemiousness. But Sayles evidently thinks there are faults worse than indulgence in the social glass, for he is determined to take his lawsuit away from Grattan and give it to Barlow in Toronto. You know how temperate Barlow is."

Mr. and Mrs. Meredith exchanged meaning glances again. Upton seemed inclined to the shaft of suggestion rankle. For a full minute no one of the party spoke. Then Marie could remain silent no longer.

"Perhaps you will be so kind, Lieut. Upton, as to enlighten us regarding the nature of Mr. Grattan's sinning, which in Mr. Sayles' eyes appears so grievous?"

Her voice was dry and metallic, the tone more of command than of persuasion. Her blue eyes were beginning to gleam ominously, and had the young man who was unconsciously but surely goading her into fury, noted the expression of her contracting countenance, it is doubtful if he would have answered so bluntly.

"Really, I'm sorry for you, Miss Meredith, but it is generally understood among the Buffalo people that Grattan is a member of the Fenian brotherhood, and that his absence at this time is in the interests of that organization. He has been a speaker at several of the meetings of in-

cendiary nature, of which the United States Government appears to take no notice, and Sayles is positive that his closing of his office at this time can only be accounted for on the supposition that he is directing his energies to assist Sweeney and the rest of the adventurers, in the organization of the invasion of Canadian territory, through which they hope to fatten their pockets and fill their stomachs."

If Lieut. Clifford Upton had any ambitious desires with Marie Meredith as the central figure, he had dug a grave for them with that cruel statement.

But the icy calm of her presence, the stunned, unchanging expression of her fair but slightly flushed face, gave no warning of the volcano of wrath soon to burst forth.

Upton recklessly continued his descent toward the fatal precipice where all his hopes were so soon to be dashed to fragments.

CHAPTER II.

A CALL TO ARMS.

"I've heard it hinted for some time that Grattan was being influenced by his surroundings to join his fortunes with the promoters of this alleged Irish Republic movement, but I gave him credit for more good sense than to ruin his chances of a prosperous legal career by engaging in such a fantastic and hopeless undertaking. He's too good a fellow to commit moral suicide, but I fear—"

"Stop !"

Marie Meredith had slowly arisen from her chair and stood with her five foot five of feminine grace and beauty drawn to its fullest height. Her hands, the palms downward, rested upon the table-cloth, supporting her as she leaned toward Upton, her eyes flashing with all the quick, impulsive anger of her Irish mother, her face stern with the unflinching resolve of her English blood.

"Stop, I say, Lieut. Upton ; you are libelling my affianced husband ! You are making charges you would not dare to utter were he here to refute them. It is a cowardly thing to do, an act utterly beneath the dignity of an officer of the Queen."

"Tut, tut, Marie, you don't know what you are saying," Meredith spoke sternly. "Lieut Upton is our guest ; he is not entitled to such treat-

ment, for I believe the reports regarding Grattan are true."

"It doesn't seem possible," ventured Mrs. Meredith, "but I'm afraid Harold has been very indiscreet."

"What? Are you all ready to listen to these lies? Are you all against him and me?"

"No, dear," said her aunt, soothingly, "never against you. We have dreaded the time when you should hear the truth, for we would have saved you from the disgrace."

"There has never been a traitor to the Government in the Meredith family, either by birth or marriage," was her uncle's comment.

"I regret exceedingly that I should be the one to broach the unpleasant subject," said Lieut. Upton, in a half-pleading tone, but the aroused girl ignored his words.

"There is no proof of this horrible story; no evidence beyond the ready suspicion of those who are quick to believe evil of others. I will stake my life on Harold's loyalty!"

"And lose, I fear, Miss Meredith," returned Upton, who, satisfied that his suggestions regarding the absent lawyer's questionable acts were readily received by other members of the family, believed that Grattan's betrothed must also soon accept them as fact.

But he had yet to learn the depth of the girl's devotion to the man who had won her heart. It was in a measure revealed to him in the days which followed.

During this time Miss Meredith had remained

standing. Outwardly she had grown more calm, but within she was burning with the outrage which had been put upon her faith. She felt that she could not endure to remain longer at the table or in the room with the man who had dared to utter this unpardonable insult to her absent lover.

But she must not forget that she was a lady. She must dissemble for the sake at least of the feelings of that kindly woman at the head of the table, who had been all to her that her own mother could have been.

So she excused herself graciously, and endeavoring not to meet the pleading, sympathetic eyes of her aunt, or the unabashed gaze of Upton, retired with the evident intention of going to her own pleasant chamber, but instead, passing from the house by a rear door, ran down the narrow path to the spot where we first found her, all her smothered anger flaming up again as soon as the restraint she had forced for appearance sake had been released.

When Billy Wood had passed out of sight around a projecting angle of the substantial farm buildings, and the rattle of milk pails, mingled with the higher notes of "Marching Through Georgia," which the music-loving chore boy had promptly substituted in his whistling repertoire, through deference for his young mistresses' wishes, Marie passed out through the lane gate, and seating herself upon the narrow horse-block before the house, turned her gaze southward once

more to where the twinkling lights of the city were beginning to show, across the distant stretch of harbor and outlet.

Off to the right, far up the lake, she marked the long, narrow line of black smoke which betrayed the presence of an incoming grain-carrier, and the three long, dull blasts of the deep-throated whistle, calling for a tug to assist the steamer in making the harbor entrance, came to her ear with familiar sound.

In the dimming distance the dark, towering shapes of the huge grain elevators stood out in silhouette against the lighter background reflected by the city's street lamps and blast furnaces. The boom of the sunset gun was borne across the gathering mists of the river from Fort Porter, and its echoes, somehow, served to carry with them an unpleasant sensation to the listening girl; a sensation of dread which had never before associated itself with the cannon's report which had every morning and night, since she had lived within reach of its detonation, been in similar manner wafted across from the American shore.

It brought a realization of what that sound really meant; the organized force of a rival country; the possibility of war, in which these neighbors who had lived in amity since the adjustment of that little misunderstanding of a half century previous, might constitute the opposing forces.

With the sound of the gun was also revealed, clear and distinct, to the young woman's sensi-

tively aroused mind, the weakness of the barrier interposed by the river between the domain of the Queen and of that of other peoples, who had just fought and won one of the world's greatest wars, and among whom, all too persistent rumor declared, thousands of desperate and determined men were organizing under the green flag of Erin, to cross that narrow boundary line and put her own fair Canada to the sword.

Suddenly there came over her the shadow of the awful possibilities which might result from such an uprising, well planned and carefully, shrewdly executed.

She shook her feeling off with determined haste; with self-reproach that for a single instant she could harbor a thought of possible harm coming to the Dominion from such a source.

But before her mental vision suddenly appeared that scene at the dinner table she had so recently left; the baseless, wicked insinuations and direct charges against Harold Grattan, whose loyalty to his home government she would have pledged with her own.

And yet, would Lieut. Upton have dared to make such accusations, especially in her presence, without some basis for their construction, some element of fact which could be produced should occasion demand?

The meeting with Billy Wood, the soothing influences of the falling twilight, her own strangely directed fancies had all served as a quieting

potion for her angered nerves, and she could now reason the matter quite calmly. Even thus she could not bring herself to entertain for a moment a single doubt of Harold. She flung her hands forward in the direction of the distant city, as though somewhere over there in that now hazy stretch of brick and mortar, of wood and stone, she would have found and embraced the absent one. Then her arms fell listless upon her lap and her eyes took on a tender expression, the sweet confidence of certain assurance, as she murmured:

"No, no, I cannot believe it; I will not doubt him. He would not deceive me. They are seeking to prejudice my mind against him for purposes of their own. Harold is impulsive, ambitious, strongly impressed with the advantages of a republic which he has imbibed over there. He might in time come to the acceptance of citizenship in the United States; but he would never stoop to the disgrace, the wickedness of betraying his Queen. It's false, false in every word! I would not believe it if Harold himself should stand before me and declare that I am wrong. Oh, why does he not come back and crush these wretched slanders!"

"He couldn't, Miss Meredith. Pardon me for overhearing your words, but your earnestness caused you to speak quite distinctly."

She started violently and instinctively sprang to her feet. Lieut. Upton stood quite close, regarding her with an unfathomable expression in his cruel, dark eyes, a glow of unmistakeable pas-

sion upon his clear-cut, patrician face, finely chiseled by nature's sculptor, but somewhat effeminate and far from trustworthy to those who could read beneath the polished exterior. And Marie Meredith had been reading it for fifteen years.

She did not speak at once, for her indignation at the young officer's persistence in this unpleasant subject was great, and she had been regretting the rather unladylike exhibition of temper she had been forced into at the table. She was fearful that she did not have herself sufficiently in hand to trust herself to reply. So she bowed coldly, and half turned as if to leave him.

"Don't go, Marie," he put out his hand to detain her, but she flung it off, and drew herself up haughtily.

"Don't touch me, Clifford Upton; don't speak to me, unless you are ready to tell me that you do not believe the cruel insinuations against the man who has always been your friend."

Her manner was near to pleading now.

"But I cannot do that, Marie. I wish to God I could. You and I, too, have been good friends, ever since we used to play as boy and girl along the shores of Lake Ontario, and launch our little boats of bark upon its outgoing waves, sending messages in our fancy, to the brother who never sent any message in return. Why should we not be good friends still?"

Her eyes were turned toward the ground now. There was a strange tone in his voice which she

had never heard before ; a new expression in the black eyes fixed with eager intentness upon her paling cheek, an expression she dared not face, which she resolutely sought to evade.

"I could not believe this rumor against Harold, myself, at first. I fought against it ; I repelled the insinuations of brother officers ; I pledged his loyalty against my own at Ottawa, where I was called to explain for him to the Government. I never expected that either he or you would know this, but you have forced me to tell it."

"And yet you were the very first to bring this thing to my ears," she murmured.

"For your good, Marie ; only for your good. But I waited until the evidence was overwhelming, until the man you trusted so implicitly stands convicted of treason by his own written words ; until the last doubt is buried."

"But the proof ? Bring me the proof, and then I will not believe it !"

He lifted his light fatigue cap from the damp, dark curls of his shapely head. The cool breeze blowing across the fields from the distant lake served to relieve the feverish flush of his rather boyish face. His lips moved as if to speak, but remained silent.

"The proof ! Give me the proof !" she demanded, facing him once more with all her former imperiousness. "I demand the proof !"

"I cannot give it," he stammered.

"No, you cannot ! There is none ; no proof,

nothing but lying, baseless, jealous rumors, which you, who claim to have been his friend, are all too quick to believe. Go, sir, I wish to be alone !"

She sank down upon the low horse-block, from which she had arisen when his presence was revealed, and clasped her hands tightly in the excess of her conflicting emotions.

He approached, but did not offer to touch her.

"I am an officer of the Queen's service, Miss Meredith—Marie," he said slowly, but firmly. "This only can I tell you, that the proof exists. You must take my word for that. To tell you more would be to violate a confidence of the Government, which, anxious as I am to convince you of the truth of what I have told you, I cannot do. I fear I have already said far too much."

"You have—you have," she groaned ; "say no more. You can never repair the wrong you have done."

She arose resolutely, scorning the hand he extended to assist her, and moved toward the house. Upton walked by her side, vainly striving to frame the words with which to answer her.

Half way to the door the attention of both was attracted by the rapid clatter of horse's hoofs upon the bridge which spanned a small creek at the foot of the elevation on which the house stood, and came pounding up the rise of ground, pausing at the gate.

Both turned to observe the rider. The twi-

light had deepened, but not sufficiently so that details were obliterated and they perceived at once that the horseman was clad in the uniform of the "Queen's Own."

"Orders, Lieutenant," the soldier cried, slipping his reins over the horse's head, tossing them about the gate-post, and walking rapidly up the path, promptly coming to attention as he reached them, and extending a coarse brown envelope.

Upton tore it open, extracted the official-looking document, held it in position to utilize all that remained of the waning daylight, and absorbed its contents at a single glance, Miss Meredith watching him anxiously. He pulled out his watch, noting the time.

"All right, sergeant, the train for Toronto departs in an hour. Have my traps sent down from the hotel, and I will meet you at the station."

The non-com. saluted, cast one boldly admiring glance at his superior's companion, turned with military precision, and a moment later the rapid beat of his horse's iron-shod hoofs was re-echoing from the well-travelled country road in the direction of Fort Erie.

For a moment Marie forgot the disagreeable features of Lieut. Upton's visit. She intuitively realized that the hurried delivery of orders, and the darkening expression of the recipient's coun-

tenance, meant more than an ordinary call to duty.

"What is it?" she asked, solicitously.

"It's war, I fear, Miss Meredith," Upton answered, not altogether firmly. "Mayor Wells, of Buffalo, has notified the Mayors of Toronto and Hamilton that armed men, supposed to be Fenians, are coming into that city in great numbers, and that an attack on Canada may be expected at any time. General Napier has already sent orders to the various commands of Toronto and Hamilton to be ready for field service at a moment's notice, and the 16th and 46th will be under arms to-night. I must make my adieux to your people at once, for I have barely time to catch the train."

They reached the house together, he holding the door with marked deference and bared head for her to enter. In the sitting-room they found Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, and Upton quickly informed them of the reported condition existing.

"I don't think you have any cause for alarm," he said, assuringly. "Of course the United States Government has been very dilatory in its action, but the message from Wells shows that the American authorities will not encourage actual invasion. Even if attempted it would be promptly stamped out by General Napier."

"Sure," was Meredith's confirmation; "and we shall expect the Queen's Own to give a good account of itself."

"We will welcome you back, when the war is

over," said Mrs. Meredith, kindly, "and trust it will not be long."

"A skirmish will end it, if there is any real clash at all," was Upton's confident assurance.

Good-byes were hastily said, and Billy Wood's ever present whistle was heard at the gate where he had been directed to bring Lieut. Upton's horse. The young soldier turned at the door. Marie Meredith had given him her hand at parting, but had remained in the centre of the room, and had simply said "Good-bye." He could not leave her thus.

"Will you come into the parlor for a moment?" he found courage to say, and in obedience to an urgent nod from her aunt, she bowed assent. When she had come and had closed the door after her, for in the present emergency, with perhaps the Queen's cause in danger and he going to help uphold the dignity and the glory of the crown, she could scarcely refuse a moment's confidence, he came forward with eagerly outstretched hands and an earnestness she could not resist.

"I wanted to have you alone for a moment," he said, rapidly, as though fearing that she would not stay to listen. "I wanted to ask you to forgive me if I have offended and pained you tonight, and to tell you that it is only because I have loved you that I have sought to prevent your being deceived. Don't turn away; listen to me. I may never have the chance to tell you this again, for this trouble may be far more serious

than we have believed. I know you would never marry any man who became a traitor to his country and to his Queen. Am I not right?"

"Yes." She scarcely breathed the answer, but he heard, heard and rejoiced.

"Don't be offended with me again to-night, Marie, don't think of me as having been cruel and unjust. I know you are the affianced wife of another man; know that I have no right to say these things to you; but I love you, have loved you ever since we quarrelled over our mud pies in the garden at Toronto, and Harold Grattan always took your part."

"Don't, don't talk like that," she pleaded, saddened but with all a woman's perversity, somewhat pleased at this tardy confession. "We can never be more than friends. It is criminal for me to listen; it is treason to the man I love—the man whose wife I shall become. Go! Go, I beg of you!"

"But if you find that these reports are true; that the man you love is unworthy of you, will you still persist in becoming his wife?"

"Don't ask me; he will not prove unworthy."

"He will; he has! Give me this assurance, before I go, perhaps never to see you again. I don't ask it because I love you, for I know that is hopeless, but for yourself. If it is proven to you that Harold Grattan is disloyal to the Crown, swear that you will not trust yourself in his keeping; that you will never wed a traitor."

The lace curtains at the open window swayed

suggestively. Upton noted, but was too much absorbed to give the matter even passing thought. Miss Meredith could not see for her head was bent, her mind controlled by some inexplicable influence, such as she had never felt before. Surely she could not be showing a lack of confidence by making such a promise, and the flushed face of the young officer thrilled her with its pleading. How could she refuse, and yet she hated herself for the irresolution which had come to her, which held her in a thrall of dumbness to protest, of incapacity to resist.

"Promise," he pleaded, and raising her right hand as if taking an oath, she began :

"If it will give you pleasure I can promise that if Harold Grattan is found assisting the cause of the Fenian Brotherhood, I will never—"

"Miss Meredith, Miss Meredith ! Here's a telegram, and I guess it's from Mr. Grattan."

The lace curtains moved more decidedly, and the head and shoulders of Billy Wood were projected into the room.

Lieut. Upton turned with an ejaculation, which Billy afterwards said sounded decidedly like "damn," and started for the door, while Miss Meredith rushed to the window to seize the envelope which Billy was holding toward her.

"Lem. Meisner brought it up from the Post Office just now," the boy explained. "He got it from the postmaster, who thought it might be important. Horse is ready, Lieutenant !"

The officer lingered for a moment, evidently

hoping that she would share the knowledge which the message brought, but she still held the envelope in her hand unopened. Billy Wood also seemed to possess an interest in the message he had brought, for he remained at the window, exhibiting no inclination to withdraw.

So it was with rather a bad grace and an abruptness which a few minutes before would have seriously disturbed Miss Meredith, but which now appeared scarcely to be noted by that absorbed young lady, that Lieut. Clifford Upton, an officer of the famous 46th Regiment, the "Queen's Own," for the time being forgot his proverbial gallantry, said "good-bye," slammed the door in anything but a well-bred manner, and strode down the garden path to where his horse was standing, with a muttered malediction upon the head of a certain freckled-face youngster who at that moment was kicking his heels into the turf beneath the Meredith parlor window, in an excess of glee.

With the slamming of the door, Marie, suddenly aroused from her momentary abstraction, hastily tore open the brown envelope and read :

St. Albans, Vt., May — 66.

To Miss Marie Meredith,

Fort Erie, Ont.

Expected to be 'ome to-night, but imperative instructions compel me to proceed to Cleveland. Home Thursday. Give no heed to any re-

ports which may seem to reflect on my motives. Trust me.

H. G.

Billy Wood, lying beneath the window where he had thrown himself as soon as Lieut. Upton had quitted the room, suddenly sat erect. A strange cry, followed by the fall of a heavy body, had caught his ear. He sprang to his feet, peered with a frightened gaze into the parlor, to see his loved mistress lying upon the floor, white and motionless, the significant telegram crushed tightly in one extended hand.

CHAPTER III.

GRATTAN AND MEREDITH MEET.

"Hello, Grattan ! Back, are you ? Glad to see you, old man."

The dapper clerk of the Constitutional Hotel, one of Buffalo's at that time leading hosteleries, sprang down from the high stool on which he had been sitting, busily engaged in a game of solitaire, and coming across to the counter, extended his arm across its flat top to grasp the hand of a young man who had entered the hotel from a side entrance, carrying a small, travel-worn grip, with a badly wrinkled linen duster thrown over his left arm.

He was of good height, of graceful, but compact build, with clear-cut features and curling brown hair falling thick and damp below the brim of a light-colored slouch hat, pushed well back from his broad, white forehead. He was dressed in a common business suit of coarse but serviceable material, grey in color, well-cut, and serving to set off the athletic proportions of the wearer to good advantage.

A cordial smile coming into the new-comer's deep-set, expressive dark eyes, lighted up, though it did not disturb the placidity of the smooth-shaven face, as he promptly seized the extended hand, shaking it warmly.

"Yes, I'm back, and a tiresome trip it has been," he said, depositing the grip under the counter and tossing the duster on top. "Missed the express, and had to come through on the accommodation. Engine got a hot journal this side of Rochester, killed a cow just outside of Batavia and narrowly missed a farmer's rig at the city line. But I'm here, and hungry as a Pennsylvania log-hauler. What's new, Joe?"

"Nothing much," the clerk returned, reaching for the grip, a movement which Grattan adroitly blocked by shoving it onside by a movement of his arm.

"Only going to stop long enough for dinner," he said, in reply to Joe's questioning look. "Got to be in Cleveland in the morning. Has the Englishman showed up yet?"

"What Englishman?"

"Why, the party I wired you about, who was to have a room adjoining mine."

"Oh, yes. No, he hasn't come. Probably be in on the Erie. Train's three hours late. Ran into a wash-out at Corning. Nobody hurt, but tracks badly blocked. Due here in thirty minutes. Have dinner now? It's just ready."

Just then the ear-splitting clang of the metal gong beaten with a padded stick by one of the colored attaches of the house, rang through the room, and conversation was for the moment suspended. As the recent arrival from the South completed his rattling summons at the front entrance, and turned into the hotel rotunda with

one last resounding blow as an emphatic climax to his warning, Grattan answered :

"Not yet. Think I'll step down to the depot and meet him if he's on the train. Bother the railroads. They're always late when you are in a hurry. Hope I don't miss him."

"Friend of yours ?" asked Joe, with the easy familiarity of long acquaintance, but just then several arrivals, prospective customers of the house, came crowding up to the desk, and the clerk was immediately engrossed with the more important matter of securing their registration, and assigning his new guests to rooms.

Harold Grattan dropped his grip behind the counter, hung the linen dust on a hook in the wall of the clerk's narrow domain, and then resumed his lounging attitude, carelessly studying the faces of the arriving guests, with an occasional glance at the hands of the regulator, with the advertisement of an insurance company covering a good portion of its front, which occupied a prominent position well toward the ceiling, just back of where Joe was industriously swinging the leather-bound register to one and another of the travellers, punctuating his movements with frequent pulls upon a short metal bar projecting from a pillar just above his head, each pull being followed by the stroke of a gong and the appearance of an officious darkey, who seized the baggage indicated, and obsequiously led its owner up the broad stairway in the direction of the upper

regions of the hotel, where lights were already beginning to appear.

Suddenly the young man started up with aroused interest as his eyes caught sight of a large man of military bearing, but clad in civilian dress, of modest appearance, who had entered the hotel, and now came down the length of the long room, glancing neither to the right or left, tossing his valise upon the counter with the nonchalance of an old traveller, and writing his name upon the book, which Joe instantly shoved before him, with a dashing hand, in characters which the most expert hotel newspaper reporter would have found some difficulty in deciphering.

As the stranger tossed the pen in the rack, and slipped the check for his baggage which the clerk extended, into his trousers pocket, he turned toward the bar-room, and in so doing confronted Grattan, whose eyes were regarding his movements with unwavering intentness.

The big man smothered an angry ejaculation, a flush mounted to his temples, but instantly recovering himself, he stepped forward with a cordial exclamation of recognition :

"Harold Grattan, by all that's holy ! I thought you were at St. Albans ?"

"I was General, but am not. There's nothing I can do there. When did you leave New York ?"

A gleam of satisfaction shot from under the general's shaggy eyebrows. He bent nearer and said in a low tone :

"I thought you'd find the Vermont men were right. I left New York on Monday, and have been a busy man ever since. There isn't any time to waste now. I hope you won't publish the fact that I am in Buffalo."

"But you will be recognized."

"Not if you keep it quiet. There are not a dozen men here who know me, and I shall try to keep out of their way. I shall only be here for a few hours. You would gain nothing by giving it away."

"You need have no fear on that score. I'm leaving the city myself to-night. I am going west, and only stopped off to meet a friend. He's coming up from New York, and his train is due in ten minutes. Glad I met you, General."

"Can't really say I'm pleased," was the frank reply. "Hope you'll have better success west than you did east," this last ironically.

"I shall," was the younger man's quiet, but convincing answer.

"We shall see."

For a moment the eyes of the two men met, each apparently seeking to read the other's thoughts; those of the general reproachful, anxious; of the other determined, almost defiant—then they parted. The stranger pursued his way in the direction of the bar-room, while Harold Grattan quitted the hotel, and walked rapidly down Exchange Street in the direction of the unpretentious little building which at that time served the Erie railroad for a passenger station.

During the conversation just recorded, which was conducted in low tones, and had attracted no attention from the hotel guests, all intent upon getting into the dining-room, Joe Starks had been intently trying to decipher the scrawl upon the hotel register, left by the big New Yorker.

"Guess that fellow don't intend to have the newspaper men interview him," was Joe's sagacious comment, as he twisted the register in various positions, eyeing the strange hieroglyphics from the different angles. "It would take a Pennsylvania lawyer to make anything out of that name. Reckon it must be a sample of the Fenian cypher code."

He chuckled at his own supposed witticism, and never knew how near to the mark his chance shot had come.

Five minutes later the stranger returned, asked for a room on the top floor, requested that his dinner be sent up to him, ignored the clerk's incredulous look, and followed the bell-boy up the stairs.

Harold Grattan walked on rapidly, past the Central Station where, a train on the Lake Shore having just arrived, importunate bus-drivers filled the air with laudation of their respective hostels, across Michigan Street, and into the western terminal of the "Old Reliable," to find that he was in ample time.

"Here in three minutes," was the curt information received at the ticket window, and Grattan, to stay the craving of his stomach for food,

lighted a cigar and strolled on the narrow platform to wait the expected arrival.

"What a surprise it will be for Marie," he mused. "Poor girl, she has known little enough of her family. Suppose she is wondering what is keeping me away so long, and I can't tell her just yet. When she knows she'll be ready to forgive this seeming neglect. Wonder what Sweeney is doing in Buffalo? Must be something important. Looks as though a crisis were near at hand. That's what makes him so anxious to keep his visit secret. I'll bet he and O'Dea will be closeted together inside of an hour, and upon the result of that conference will depend the destiny of the Irish Republic. Honest but misguided effort. Poor Ireland! Her warmest friends are likely to prove her worst enemies. Well, no matter what comes, I shall feel that I have only done my duty as I understand it; no man can do more than that. There's that train at last, thank goodness. I wonder if the Major's come."

He threw away the half-smoked cigar and walked down the platform past the wheezing locomotive, from the cab window of which the engineer, in his blue blouse and overalls, was leaning to watch the rapidly discharging train-load of passengers and baggage, impatient to take his engine away to the yard roundhouse, for this was the end of the division, and when the iron horse was stabled, there would be twelve

hours of rest before starting upon the return run.

Alongside the baggage car he paused, and standing a little to one side out of the way of the bustling baggagemen and their over-burdened trucks, began intently scanning the thin line of hurrying passengers pressing eagerly forward to reach the dingy station.

"Wonder if I'll know him?" soliloquized Grattan, as his eye ran along the moving stream of humanity which the well-filled coaches had dumped upon the long platform. He drew a foreign-looking photograph from his inside coat pocket and scanned it carefully, then returning it and again directing his attention to the crowd.

A moment later he stepped forward confidently and confronted a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow of perhaps twenty-four, clad in a check suit of English tweed, his tawny hair covered by a Scotch travelling cap, a large black leather portmanteau in his hand, a steamer shawl thrown carelessly over one shoulder.

"You're Major Meredith, I take it?" Grattan said, extending his hand, which the blond young man, quickly changing his baggage from the right to the left, as promptly grasped.

"Mr. Grattan, I suppose? Yes, I'm Meredith, that is what's left of me, though if I'd known the character of your blooming railroads I should have come on from New York by canal."

Grattan laughed cheerfully.

"Roadbed is in rather bad shape, I reckon,

after the spring freshets. Labor was scarce during the last two years of the war, and it will take some time to get the tracks in proper shape again. Forget it if you can, and come along up to the hotel. I've a room engaged for you, and a good dinner will serve to alter the too hasty opinion you seem to have formed of us. Got any other baggage?"

"No, my trunks were sent on to Toronto, where I am to join my regiment. Deuced kind of you to meet me." He gave Grattan a searching, changing to an admiring glance. "I believe I'd have known you anywhere."

"Common interest," said Grattan. "I spotted you instantly."

"Any new developments?" Meredith asked, after a pause, regarding Grattan with anxious inquiry.

"Nothing definite since I wired you. I'm working on a clue which I believe will lead to something tangible. I believe I'm on the right track, and that I shall find him in Cleveland, where I go to-night. Will you visit your uncle before going to Toronto?"

"I think so; I have a great desire to see Marie. You haven't told her?"

"Not a word; she doesn't even suspect. In fact I haven't seen one of the family in three weeks. I've been very busy."

"I should judge so from your letter. Suppose there'll be no trouble getting a rig from Fort Erie?"

"Not the slightest. There's a good livery, and it's only a five-mile drive. I'm sorry I can't go over with you, but I feel that every moment is precious now."

Meredith seized Grattan's hand and wrung it cordially.

"I'll never forget what you are doing for us," he said, with honest gratitude beaming in his broad English face.

They passed through the little station and out into Exchange Street, chatting familiarly as if life-long acquaintances. No one to have observed them would have suspected that they had met for the first time scarce ten minutes before.

Grattan led the way through the crush of hacks, hotel omnibusses and drays which, following a train arrival, made Exchange Street almost impassable for pedestrians, brushed past the obtrusive "speilers" of the numerous cheap restaurants which then as now make that thoroughfare a place to be avoided by the unsophisticated, and finally brought the young Englishman to the Constitutional, just as the first diners were clipping the ends of their after-dinner cigars.

"Found him, I see," was the clerk's comment addressed to Grattan, as he reached for a room-key with one hand and signalled the bell-boy with the other. "Room's all ready, Mr. a-ah-Meredith," he continued, with a rapid professional glance taking in the register inscription—"Major Douglas Meredith, —th Regiment, Toronto." "Mr. Grattan looked after that, and

you'll find a bath and everything convenient. Here, boy, show the gentleman up to No. 15."

"You are very thoughtful," was Meredith's acknowledgment to Grattan, as the latter recovered his own grip and duster, and followed the Englishman up the broad stairs.

Fifteen minutes later they were seated at a quiet table in a retired corner of the spacious dining-room, and the wondering darkey waiter was receiving an order from the half-famished lawyer, which caused anything but complimentary comment in the cook's domain when it was repeated there.

"Mr. ah—Major Meredith!" hailed Joe as they came out some time later. "Here a telegram for you. Was just going to send it in."

Major Meredith took the coarse envelope the clerk extended, tore it open, and read it with a frown gathering upon his handsome face, crushing the yellow slip in his hand when he had done so, with a muttered ejaculation of disgust.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" said Grattan, solicitously.

"Nothing exactly serious, but at the same time unpleasant," was Meredith's answer. "It's from Lieut.-Col. Bevins, and directs that I report for duty at the earliest possible moment. What time is the first Grand Trunk train out of here?" he continued, turning to the clerk.

Joe studied the bulletin board suspended below the big clock.

"Leaves 10.15, and is on time."

"Deucedly sorry, old man," Meredith said, walking along to the cigar case with Grattan. "I'll have to leave in an hour."

"And you won't be able to see Marie after all?"

"Not for a few days at least. It's an awful disappointment, but duty is duty, and an Englishman places duty before inclination. I can't understand the cause of this sudden order, though."

With their cigars lighted, Grattan led the way to a secluded corner of the room, and pushing forward an easy chair for his companion, drew another close and sat down.

"The reason is obvious," he said in a low tone. "Evidently the Canadian authorities have got word of the contemplated Fenian movement, and intend to be prepared for trouble."

Major Meredith smiled incredulously.

"I've been reading what the newspapers say about that idiotic movement, but I didn't suppose anybody considered it anything more than a newspaper yarn. You don't take it seriously, do you?"

Grattan flicked the white ash from his cigar, and contemplated its glowing end for a moment thoughtfully.

"I'm afraid I do," he said, quietly, at length. "I'm not at liberty at this time to explain, but I've had pretty strong evidence within the past hour that an important movement on the part of the Fenian Brotherhood is on foot. What it will amount to time alone can reveal."

"But surely the United States Government would not countenance any deliberate plan of invasion of British territory from this side?" cried Meredith, incredulously, visibly impressed by Grattan's serious manner.

"Not countenance, but permit through its failure to realize the magnitude of the movement for Irish independence now under way," was Grattan's answer.

The Englishman regarded the man whose acquaintance he had so recently made, and toward whom he had been irresistibly drawn from the first, with a new interest.

For some time, even before leaving England, he had been in communication with the Buffalo lawyer in reference to matters in which both were strongly, the major vitally, interested. The correspondence thus maintained had served in a measure to give him some knowledge of the antecedents of the man with whom he had trusted important personal matters. He knew that Grattan expected soon to be related to him more closely by family ties, and when he first met the frank, companionable young fellow at the station, he had promptly admitted to himself that he was well pleased with his sister's choice of a husband. That impression had grown during the walk to the hotel and at the table; but now a suspicion of some unpleasant element having obtruded into their relations, rested upon his mind and chilled the warmth of his manner.

"Much good it would do them," he finally

said. "Uncle Sam, I take it, has his hands about full with his reconstruction plans. He would not care to try conclusions with John Bull just at present, and so far as the Fenians are concerned, they'd be fighting among themselves before they reached the first big Canadian town. Grattan, you surely don't approve of any such visionary scheme?"

Grattan felt in his vestpocket for a match, struck it by a dextrous flip across the sole of his shoe, then took his unlighted cigar from his mouth and held its charred end in the blaze for several seconds. Then he tossed the nearly consumed match into a convenient cuspadore, replaced his cigar, and drew several vigorous puffs before replying :

"Why visionary?"

"Because impossible."

There was a growing coldness in Major Meredith's tone, which only served to arouse the beligerency of Harold Grattan's Irish nature. Forgetful for the instant that this really companionable young Englishman was the brother of his affianced, and the man of all others whom he would desire to fraternize with, he replied somewhat hotly :

"I cannot agree with you, Major. Whether or not the invasion of Canadian territory would be judicious, the certainty of the justice of Ireland's plea for liberty is not to be questioned. Properly organized and shrewdly conducted, the

present movement would assuredly result in the success of the Irish cause."

Major Meredith's jaw fell.

"I regret that I did not sooner learn the direction of your sympathies," he said.

"I am an Irishman," was Grattan's significant reply.

"But still a subject of the Queen, I had supposed."

"There you are wrong, Major. I am not."

Meredith had arisen, and Grattan followed his example. For a full moment they stood regarding each other with far from friendly regard. Suddenly the ridiculous feature of the case was revealed to Grattan, and he burst into a hearty laugh.

"You and I cannot afford to quarrel," he said. "I'm Irish, and cursed with the Irishman's quick temper. We're on neutral ground now, so let us be friends. When you see me leading a Fenian force in Canada, it will be time for us to come to blows."

Meredith held out his hand with all his former friendly bearing.

"By Gad, you're right, man, I was near forgetting your kindness. We'll do our fighting beyond the border."

Thus they parted, the hotel porter's announcement of the time of departure of the Lake Shore train for the west, sending Grattan scurrying after his grip, and a few minutes later he left the hotel without meeting Meredith again.

The deep bass of the train announcer was echoing through the big room as the young man entered the Central Station.

"Train for Cleveland leaves in one minute."

Grattan did not wait for a ticket. The gate-keeper knew him and made no motion to stop him as he rushed through the narrow door and across the intervening tracks, on the further side of which stood the west-bound train, the drive wheels of the locomotive already beginning to revolve.

As he caught the platform of the last coach, and with a lucky swing landed safely upon the car platform, he heard his name called, and glancing up the wide platform of the smoke-blackened train-shed, saw a bare-headed boy running recklessly toward him.

"Mr. Grattan Mr. Grattan! Hold on a minute. Miss Meredith—"

Then the train sped out of earshot, but looking back, startled at the strange proceedings, half tempted to spring from the rapidly moving car, Harold Grattan could still distinguish the speeding form of Billy Wood, wildly waving a letter in his hand.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE AND LOYALTY.

To say that Billy Wood was alarmed when he discovered his young mistress lying like one dead on the parlor carpet, would be describing his sensations mildly. Marie Meredith was a particularly healthy and athletic young woman, and the idea of her having fainted was furthest from Billy's thoughts.

Some terrible accident, he believed, had befallen her ; but the boy did not lose his head.

Quickly running around the house to the kitchen door, he startled Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, who were quietly discussing their recent visitor and his sudden summons for military duty, unconscious that anything out of the ordinary had occurred in the adjoining room.

"Oh, Mr. Meredith," Billy cried, as he burst unceremoniously into the sitting room, "Miss Meredith's dead, I guess. She's a-layin' in there, white as a ghost, an' she don't move."

Before the frightened boy had completed his summons, James Meredith was attempting to raise the still unconscious form of his niece, and with Billy's ready assistance, Marie was quickly deposited upon the hair-cloth sofa, her dress was loosened, and Mrs. Meredith, fully as cool in emergency as her husband, was chafing the girl's wrists and temples with camphor, which she had

promptly procured from a small family medicine closet in the sitting-room.

"Shan't I go after a doctor?" Billy asked, greatly worried, but somewhat reassured by the calmness of the farmer and his wife.

"No, no; that won't be necessary," was Meredith's prompt answer. "She'll be all right in a minute. What in the world could have caused it?"

"Marie never fainted before in her life," was Mrs. Meredith's comment. "I can't understand it."

"I guess she got rather excited over the talk about Grattan," observed her husband. "I was afraid Upton was going too far. Eh? What's this?"

His attention was attracted at that instant to the crumpled telegram which had fallen from Miss Meredith's hand, and which Billy Wood, prompted by some sudden desire to shield his mistress' secrets, was surreptitiously attempting to kick out of sight under the sofa.

He reached out his hand for the paper, and Billy somewhat hesitatingly handed it over.

"Wonder where this came from?" cried Meredith, reading the message aloud.

"Why it's from Harold," commented Marie's aunt, ceasing for an instant her ministrations to the unconscious girl. "How strangely it is worded. How could she have received it? Could it have been brought by Lieut. Upton?"

"Certainly not," was Meredith's positive comment. "He would have given it to her before this."

Billy Wood explained the manner in which the telegram had been received, and the incident of Upton's rather abrupt departure.

"I guess if he'd a had it he'd a tore it up instead of givin' it to her," was Billy's sententious comment.

"You go out in the kitchen ; you're not needed here," said Meredith, abruptly. Billy went, with one lingering glance at the face of his mistress, to which the blood was now returning.

"She's coming to," said Mrs. Meredith, and then Marie sat up.

"What ever has happened ?" she asked wonderingly. "Did I faint ? How ridiculous !"

"Do you feel better now, dear ?"

"Yes, I'm perfectly well. It must have been the heat. Oh, there's my telegram." Her uncle handed over the suspicious yellow slip. "I wonder what Harold can mean ? He speaks so mysteriously."

"I think you interpreted his message correctly at first," said her uncle, suggestively.

"No, I did not," she declared, blushing violently. "I'm ashamed to admit that at first I looked upon the message as a confirmation of Lieut. Upton's charges. There's been so much talk of Fenian organization at St. Albans, and of sympathy with the movement in Cleveland, that the telegram seemed a confession that Har-

old was indeed working in that cause. I was very foolish, very silly and weak."

"It is best to look at this matter sensibly, Marie," said Meredith, heedless of his wife's warning glance, and with more of reprimand in his tone than he had ever before employed in addressing his niece. "I trust that your confidence in Harold Grattan is not misplaced, but I fear you are doomed to disappointment, and it is for your interest alone that we are concerned. If all we suspect is true, it will not be so surprising. Harold Grattan will not be the first good man who has gone wrong. There are any number of talented Irishmen in the United States, many of them in Buffalo, who are being carried along with the enthusiasm of a fancied independence for Ireland, without realizing what the carrying out of such plans as T. W. Sweeney and William R. Rogers have formed, would really mean."

"What would it mean, uncle?"

She was wonderfully cool now, and Meredith felt that she was being brought over to the side of reason. Mrs. Meredith also appeared relieved.

"The plunging of two great and friendly nations into war," he said, impressively.

"England and America?"

"Yes."

She was silent for a space, and Meredith had no desire to interrupt the current of her thoughts.

"And suppose they should—suppose England and the United States should become involved in

war," she said, finally, "what would be the result?"

"There could be only one result," he returned, confidently. "The American Republic would again become a dependency of Great Britain. North and South have been driven to the limit of their resources by the four years' struggle over the slave question, and besides, if England should go to war against the present Federal Government at Washington, the late Confederacy would surely prove a valuable ally against her recent adversary. That portion of the United States above the Mason and Dixon line would be crushed between the upper and the nether millstones."

"But according to the newspapers," Marie interposed, "there are fully as many or more men of the South who are likely to take part in the invasion, if one is undertaken."

"In a sense that is perhaps true. In the proposed Fenian movement, should it materialize, it is quite likely that there would be drawn from the wreckage of the Confederate army, more fighting men than from the forces of the North, which was made up in great part from the working class who have now returned to their farms and their workshops. The Fenians will secure their invaders from among that element which was left stranded high and dry by the surrender of Lee at Appomattox; a lot of free lances whose natural inclination is for the free and easy life of the raider, who were spoiled for the existence of the quiet citizen by the laxity of law controlling

the soldier in time of war, and who would engage in any expedition which promised an opportunity for loot, no matter what the ostensible object of the movement. But the brains of the organization, the head center of the present agitation is in New York, its backing a lot of ambitious politicians who will furnish the sinews of war, induce these poor fellows to precipitate a conflict, carefully keeping their own precious heads out of danger, and then step in for the lion's share if there should chance to be a division of plunder."

"But why does the United States Government permit such things? Why doesn't it crush the movement at once?"

"For one reason that the Government itself is but a creature of the politicians. It is made and unmade by them. At the present time the better element of the party in power is absorbed in the difficult task of bringing order out of the chaos into which civil war has plunged their whole country, and are paying very little attention to the new peril which is threatening them, which is being secretly encouraged by that element antagonistic to the administration. It is a deep game to cast discredit upon the dominant party by embroiling it in war with a foreign power. The people of the United States have had enough of conflict to satisfy them for years to come. Their hearts are too much saddened by the terrible results of the strife just ended to allow them to be lured by the thoughts of con-

quest and added territory. But the plotters are remarkably crafty ; they have caught upon the one possible thing to arouse the enthusiasm of the people."

"How is that ?"

Marie was deeply interested in her uncle's discourse on the subject which previous to that evening had failed to make any impression upon her mind. She playfully pulled Mrs. Meredith down upon the sofa beside her, lovingly passing her arm about the elder woman's waist, saying :

"Go on, uncle. Aunt and I want to be posted so when the subject of the Fenian outbreak comes up we can converse intelligently. What argument is used ?"

"But I fear I have already talked too long. I don't want to tire you with my dry reasoning," said Meredith, solicitously.

"Oh, I'm not one bit tired, and I'm anxious to hear more. Please don't remind me of my foolish exhibition of weakness, I promise you it will not occur again. Do you think, uncle, that it's all a plot to force the United States into a conflict with us ?"

"Not all, but in part. The Fenian leaders are no doubt sincere in their desire and proposed effort for Irish independence, but they are being hoodwinked by the politicians who are lending them assistance or at least encouragement. These shrewd tricksters know that the word 'liberty' has a seductive sound to the average American,

and the thought of a free Irish republic will enthruse every Irishman who has foresworn allegiance to the Queen. They are an impulsive people, quick to resent imposition, to magnify insult—of just the disposition to rush blindly into any plan which promises them self-government, without considering the consequences if they were to fail. America has no better or more loyal citizens than these same Irishmen, but in this case it would appear that their zeal for their native land has blinded their eyes to the obligation they owe to the country of their adoption ; to the real purposes of those who are stimulating their hopes by a false and dangerous friendship. One cannot so much blame those citizens of the United States of Irish descent, who have an inherited desire for Irish independence ; but any subject of the English Government who defiantly espouses the cause of the Fenian Brotherhood, by that act becomes a felon, and whether punished for his crime or not, loses all claim to the friendship of the Queen's loyal subjects."

Miss Meredith did not flinch. She was pressing the steel into her own heart and the pain gave her pleasure, as had that other self-inflicted wound earlier in the evening. Her uncle noted her present apparent unconcern with satisfaction. He believed that the rebellion he had most feared—Marie's allegiance to her fiance no matter what might appear against him—had been subdued.

"I have been plain, Marie, for your own good," he said, half apologetically, for the sober

man of affairs, who had made his own way in the world, who had held positions of trust and confidence under the Government to which he was unwaveringly loyal, with all the true Englishman's belief in and devotion to his sovereign, stood somewhat in awe of his quick-witted and rather imperious kinswoman, though she had been to him as an own daughter.

"I know your intentions have been of the best," she returned, no evidence of the struggle going on in her own heart showing in the quiet, even tones of her voice. "Perhaps you are right ; perhaps I have trusted Harold too blindly."

She sat quite thoughtfully, glancing down at her slim white hands clasped in her lap, the small diamond that had been Harold's mother's engagement ring flashed up at her.

No, she could not, would not doubt the man who had placed it there, no matter what came ! But open resistance to the opinions of her sincere but mistaken relatives would only increase their efforts to convince her that she had been deceived, that her confidence was misplaced. She must be discreet and diplomatic.

"Now you are the good, sensible girl I have always given you the credit for being," returned James Meredith, satisfaction expressed in his tone. "To bring yourself to the point where you can philosophically accept what happens is half the battle won. Within a few days now you will be satisfied of the wisdom of such a course. Per-

haps we'd best drop the subject for the present. Do you feel like playing some for us?"

"Now, don't ask any more of the poor girl to-night, James," interposed Mrs. Meredith, but Marie arose promptly.

"I feel as though I should enjoy some music myself," she said, brightly. "Possibly it will drive away the blues. I'm glad you mentioned it, uncle."

She went to the piano, stopping on the way to push back with her hand the iron-grey hair and imprint a kiss upon her uncle's forehead, an attention which surprised while it greatly pleased him. That he was wonderfully fond and proud of Marie was clearly expressed in his eyes as their glance followed her to the instrument, remaining there drinking in her beauty and her perfection of movements as she opened the piano, adjusted her music and dashed into one of his favorite compositions.

James Meredith was a hard, stern man, as are many of those through whose veins flows the commingled tide of Scotch and English blood. With that sternness was all the inflexible integrity which is another birthright of the mixed race of which James Meredith was a grand representative. Most faithfully and earnestly had he guarded the self-reposed trust which the misfortune of his brother had shown him he could not conscientiously evade. Marie's advantages had been many and they had been improved, a fact which gave her benefactor ample reward for his sacrifice

in her behalf. If he loved anything in the world better than his honor and his wife, it was that graceful, perfect womanly form with the crown of bronze gold hair sitting there on the piano stool, her shapely hands flying over the ivory keys with the speed of thought and the perfection of touch of a magician of music.

Only one flaw appeared in the picture she formed, as photographed upon James Meredith's receptive mind. That flaw was the diamond which, as the wearer's left hand sped over the ivory, appeared to flash back at him an angry defiance; to mock him and his efforts to prevent the consummation of that for which the gem stood in pledge.

Suddenly she ceased playing and turned toward him.

"When are you going to Toronto?" she asked. Evidently her mind had not been absorbed with her notes.

"I was thinking of going to-morrow," he returned. "I have some business there that I have neglected too long already, which now requires prompt attention. Why? Would you like to go with me?"

"I should, indeed. May I?"

"We'll have to leave it to your Aunt Martha, I think. I believe I can arrange it if she is willing."

Mrs. Meredith smiled. As if the desires of the head of that house were not a law unto them-

selves? It was pleasant, however, to be consulted.

"I think it would be an excellent change for Marie," she returned. "I was going to suggest the same thing."

Marie gave her a grateful look.

"You're always planning for my comfort and pleasure," she said impulsively. "I'm sorry I behaved so rudely to-night at the table. Will you forgive me, auntie?"

There was the plaint of a repentant child in her voice, and Mrs. Meredith came over to her side, placing her arm about the plump shoulders with true motherly tenderness.

"I'm not going to think about to-night again," she said, "and neither must you."

"Well, it's all arranged then, and I think I will retire," said Meredith. "We'll go up on the afternoon train and remain over night. You're sure you won't object to being left alone?" he continued, addressing his wife.

"Certainly not. I shall not be lonesome with Bettie and Billy Wood both here. I think they would be able to protect me from the Fenians if they should come in your absence."

Meredith laughed.

"They'll never get as far as this," he said confidently.

James Meredith was well pleased with Marie's expressed desire to accompany him on his trip to Toronto. It might serve to turn her attention from Grattan, for if the troops were pre-

paring for action, the volunteers would doubtless be called out and the city where they had lived so long would doubtless be very lively, with much to occupy the attention of the visitor. At least it would cause her to forget, for a time, the disagreeable incidents of the present evening.

To Mrs. Meredith, when that admirable woman and excellent housewife had assured herself that the doors were all securely fastened, the clock wound and the manifold duties of the mistress of the house properly adjusted for the night, and was disrobing, he had said, confident in the belief that the most serious danger was over :

"I feel much safer about Marie. I imagine she begins to see things as they really are, and will give Grattan up without making us any more trouble."

And Mrs. Meredith had answered, with all a woman's perversity :

"Don't be too sure of that, James. Marie is a peculiar girl, and I don't think you could have made a greater mistake than you have to-night."

But conscious in the strength of his own argument, James Meredith had dropped off to sleep and failed to hear the closing prophecy of his wife's comment.

At that moment, in her own chamber, prone upon her white bed, her clothing intact, Marie, sobbing as if her heart would break, poured out the sweet incense of her soul to the absent one,

in protestations of confidence and pledges of faithfulness though every other friend deserted him.

"What ails Miss Marie?" asked Bettie Bowers, the maid of all work, of Billy Wood next morning, in the cellar where Billy was straining the milk and Bettie had come for the butter for breakfast. "She just came downstairs an' she looks as if she'd been cryin' all night. I hope that Lieut. Upton don't come here no more. I guess he's had something to do with it."

"Don't you think she's been a-cryin' fer him," was Billy's assuring retort. "Don't you think Miss Marie 'd cry fer the likes of him; she's got too much brains."

"Much you know about brains," said the girl maliciously, tossing her head coquettishly, and giving Billy a side glance from her black eyes which nearly caused him to drop the full pan of milk he was carrying to the shelf.

"Maybe I don't as a rule," said he, "but I know Miss Marie's too smart to care whether that lunk head comes or goes. If you'd a seen her last night a-layin' down the law to that feller, I guess you'd a thought she didn't ask any odds of him."

"How was that, Billy?"

"Oh, never mind, I don't know nothin'."

"Pshaw! Billy, I was only jokin', you know I was. What happened last night?"

She sidled up to him in a patronizing way, and driven beyond control by the tempting fullness of her red lips turned up toward him, Billy

caught her plump form in his arms and valiantly essayed to kiss her, receiving for his trouble a resounding blow on the mouth from the girl's ready hand, and a sudden push which sent him staggering backward. He tried desperately to recover his balance, but the cellar floor was slippery, and down he went, sitting squarely in a washtub half filled with buttermilk which he had been intending to carry out for the pigs.

"Now, when you find out, just let me know," he cried angrily, ruefully striving to brush the white liquid from his soaked trousers, and though Bettie really sympathized with him, and procuring a dry cloth, sought to assist him, the indignity which he believed she had deliberately put upon him, was too much for speedy forgiveness, and he went away in the direction of the barn, vowing that he would never gratify her curiosity.

"Well, a kiss ain't so much," philosophised Betty as she set about cleaning up the spilled milk from the cellar floor. "I reckon it would a been better to let him have it. But he might 'ave asked."

During the morning Mr. Meredith sent Billy Wood to the blacksmith shop, a half-mile away, to have the horses reshod, intending to have Watson, the one farm hand he employed regularly, in addition to Billy, keep the plow going during his absence in Toronto. Billy came home before noon in a state of high excitement. There is no place in a country neighborhood from which news is more quickly disseminated than from the

corner blacksmith shop, and during his visit to that centre of gossip, Billy Wood had heard that which set his heart to beating more rapidly and sent him home at top speed as soon as the blacksmith had finished the job which had been the occasion of his visit.

As he came up the lane, his eyes eagerly searching for Marie, he caught a glimpse of her through the open window of the parlor and called eagerly :

"Miss Marie! Miss Marie!"

"What is it, Billy? What has happened?" she enquired, coming out upon the verandah and regarding him with some alarm as she noted his visible perturbation.

"Oh, Miss Marie, it ain't happened yet, but it's goin' to if Mr. Grattan comes this side of the line!" He spoke with lowered voice regardless of his anxiety, as if conscious that the news he brought must reach no ears but hers. "There's a warrant out for his arrest!"

She did not faint this time, but her face took on a firmer, more determined expression than the lad had ever noticed there before.

"Where did you hear this, Billy?" she asked in even tone and a smile which served in a great measure to relieve the excited state of Billy Wood's feelings.

"Over at the shop. They say all the constables in the county 'ave got a copy of the warrant and have got orders to serve it just as soon

as Mr. Grattan sets foot on Canadian soil. What'll we do, Miss Meredith?"

"Wait a minute till I think. Go on to the barn with the horses and don't say a word of this to anyone. I'll go out to the well for a pitcher of water in fifteen minutes. Meet me there."

When he had stabled the horses and given them their mid day ration of grain, Billy Wood came very naturally to the well near the back door, emptied the bucket of water which always stood on the top stone just inside the curb, into the small trough connecting with the larger in the lane, from which the horses and cattle drank. Then he pulled down the long rope and allowed the oaken bucket to descend to the bottom below, filling it from the clear, cold water. After bringing it up once more, its mission accomplished, dipping with its icy contents. Then, lifting it to the cup he took from a nail driven in the inside of the curb, he drank long and refreshingly.

Before he had replaced the cup Marie Meredith came out with her pitcher, and as he stooped to fill it for her, she asked:

"Could you go to Buffalo to-night, Billy, if I let you take Firefly to ride to Ft. Erie?"

"Sure, Miss Meredith, I could go anywhere you asked me to."

"You know where the Lake Shore Station is?"

"Yes, in Exchange street."

"And the Constitutional Hotel?"

"Used to black boots there."

"Mr. Grattan has a room at that hotel. He will pass through Buffalo to-night on his way to Cleveland. He will probably stop at the hotel. You might find him there before he goes to the train. I want you to take this letter to him, and tell him all you heard at the blacksmith shop. Can you do it, Billy?"

"Sure; and only too glad to do it fer you and him, Miss Meredith. He's the right sort."

"I can trust you, Billy? You won't tell anyone where you are going, or why?"

"Not a soul. They couldn't choke it out of me!"

Marie smiled at his earnestness and complimented him on his devotion.

"You're a good boy, Billy, and I'll remember you in my will if you succeed," she said playfully.

"And sure I hope it'll be a long time before you're makin' it," he returned with true Irish wit.

"And, remember, you mustn't fail! I'll fix the matter with uncle so you won't have any trouble to get away. I think I can find an excuse for sending you across the river. Be careful of Firefly and don't ride her too fast."

She gave him the letter which he quickly placed in an inside pocket of his loose farm jacket, to be transferred to more secure quarters when he had dressed for his trip.

"I'll show her that I didn't fail," he said

with emphatic gesture as she returned to the house and he plunged his perspiring face into the tin wash basin of water upon the bench at the door, preparatory to meeting Betty again at the kitchen table.

CHAPTER V.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

Half an hour after the military-looking gentleman whom Harold Grattan had addressed as General in the lobby of the Constitutional Hotel had followed the bell-boy up the stairs, a thin, nervous man, dressed in black, smooth shaven and having a strongly ministerial appearance, walked briskly up to Joe Starks' desk, glanced quickly over the list of late arrivals upon the register, and taking from his pocket a rather large business card, handed it to the clerk with the remark :

"Send this up to No. 46. I s'pose he's in?"

"Went up only a few minutes ago. He's eating his supper now."

The bell-boy summoned by Starks ran upstairs, coming back in a few minutes with the statement :

"Forty-six says to show the gemmen up."

"Well, now, that means something," was the clerk's muttered comment as the ministerial-looking gentleman followed the colored boy up the broad stairway. "There's something in the wind sure, when Pat O'Dea sends Harris around here so soon to see this New Yorker. Must have been notified he was coming, too, for he seemed to know he was here all right."

The occupant of No. 46 had just completed his repast and had rung for the waiter to carry away the empty dishes, when his visitor was ushered into the room. The latter came forward eagerly as soon as the bell-boy had closed the door, and extended his hand.

"How are you, Gen. Sweeney?" he asked. "Don't you remember me?" for the general had made no move to take the extended hand, "I came to see you in New York on a little matter for Mr. O'Dea last April. I'm Harris, Mr. O'Dea's secretary."

General Sweeney, for the big man was indeed the commander-in-chief of the Fenian army, at that time mobilizing at various points along the Canadian frontier, had removed his coat and was occupying one chair tilted back at right angles, with his feet resting in another. He nodded as Harris finished his explanation, but gave no other sign of recognition, nor did he alter his half recumbent position.

"You sent up O'Dea's card and I supposed it was he," said Sweeney, petulantly. "Why didn't he come? I don't care to discuss the important matters I have in mind with every Tom, Dick and Harry that the Secretary chooses to send around."

"Secretary O'Dea is a very busy man," was Harris' reply, with no appearance of resentment at the general's little less than insulting comment, though the words of the big man rankled. "I can assure you that I have his fullest confi-

dence, and you can talk as freely to me as you would to him were he here in person."

There was a certain straightforwardness to the man, a ring of sincerity in his tone, which Sweeney, with long experience in controlling and judging men, was quick to perceive and prompt to analyze.

"I guess you're all right, Harris," he said, in a somewhat more conciliatory tone. "I admit I was somewhat put out at first, for I have only a few hours in Buffalo, and I came expecting to meet the secretary. Just touch that bell there."

Harris did as requested, and when the waiter appeared, Sweeney gave an order for cigars.

"Bring the best you've got, and see here, boy," with a somewhat enquiring glance at Harris' clerical looking garments, "bring some good Irish whiskey and glasses."

"You may be sure I should not have come except under direction of Mr. O'Dea," said Harris, when the darkey had bowed himself out. "I am his confidential secretary, and really am better able to talk to you than he. It is a fact, general, that the secretary has never been able to successfully master the English language, and sometimes finds it difficult to express himself clearly to those who are not perfectly familiar with his linguistic deficiency."

"I've heard that O'Dea has a brogue," returned the general with a laugh; "but he's a good man for the work that has been given to him to do, and no more devoted friend of suffer-

ing Ireland exists to-day than Patrick O'Dea, more power to him."

"He's putting his last dollar into this enterprise," said Harris earnestly, "and if it fails he'll be penniless."

There was a low rap at the door, the waiter came in, deposited the liquor and cigars upon the table, pocketed the fifty-cent shinplaster which Sweeney tossed across to him, with a grin which exposed two extensive rows of ivory, then took himself off.

"No, sir," Sweeney continued, when he had poured out a generous portion of the liquor and pushed the decanter within Harris' reach, holding his own glass up contemplatively between his eye and the lamp, "failure is a word that shall never be found in the vocabulary of the Irish Republic, which we shall establish as surely as the sun keeps its course. Let's drink to the success of the cause!"

Both men rose to their feet, held their glasses high for a full minute, then slowly lowered, brought them together and drank in silence. There was something almost in the nature of an oath in the impressive action.

"Now tell me how conditions are in Buffalo," said General Sweeney, when the two had resumed their seats and lighted their cigars. Are you having any trouble in securing the necessary arms and ammunition?"

"No, our efforts have been most successful. We've got two thousand muskets, all in excellent

shape, some of the best disposed of by the government, already secreted in a cellar on Elk street, where they can be distributed to the men at an hour's notice, utterly without the knowledge of the authorities, if they should feel disposed to make us trouble. Our plans are absolutely perfect."

"And the ammunition?"

"Came on from Troy, securely packed and shipped as type, consigned to a printer who is as loyal as yourself, general. It has already been turned over to the Secretary of War and is as securely concealed and as easy of access as the arms."

"How much?"

"One hundred thousand rounds of powder and musket balls, and quite an amount of ammunition for the officers' pistols."

"You have done well indeed. And how about the troops?"

"They are coming in daily and are being quartered in various sections of the city. There are probably eight hundred men here to-night, not including those we are sure of in Buffalo, who could be put under arms and landed in Canada within two hours."

"Good! Good! Do the men attract any attention?"

"Scarcely any. They are not in uniform; they keep well separated and are a quiet, well-behaved lot. They mingle with the citizens of the town freely on the streets, visit the reading

rooms, saloons, hotels and other public places, but do not air their opinions or engage in controversy."

"What is the attitude of the Federal authorities?"

"So far as one can see, impassive. They realize, of course, that there are a good many strangers in the city, and probably suspect that something is in the wind, but so far the men have given the United States marshals no opportunity to exercise their authority. The men are unarmed; they are sober and orderly. Some of them have secured employment and are at work every day. No matter what the government suspects, it has no more right to bother the members of the Brotherhood than it has to molest any other well-behaved citizen."

General Sweeney smoked in silence for several minutes, then suddenly, as if a new thought had come to him, enquired:

"How about the military? Has there been any noticeable activity about Fort Porter?"

"None whatever. We have friends in the garrison who keep us informed as to what is going on there. It is understood that Major Duerr, the commandant, has received instructions from Washington to guard against any armed bodies crossing the river, but he evidently attaches little importance to the floating rumors of a contemplated advance on Canada, for there has been no increase of vigilance at the fort. We could take the men over right under their noses and

they'd never be the wiser, till they heard the guns on the other side."

Sweeney laughed heartily, then proceeded to pour out another glass of the genial liquor.

"They'll wake up some fine morning to find that the Army of the Irish Republic is a living, breathing reality," he said. "What is Uncle Samuel's navy doing?"

"At present," returned Harris, "there is only one boat at this end of the lake, the warship Michigan. She's been lying at the north end of the harbor for the past two weeks, but she has practically but a small complement of men, and really it would not be a very difficult matter to capture her."

"Such an attempt must not be thought of!" returned General Sweeney quickly and forcefully. "Must not be thought of; do you understand? There must be absolutely no interference with the Federal government, no matter what happens. To attempt the capture of a United States vessel would be the suicide of our hopes. We must be in a position to merit the friendship of the Federal government, when we have demonstrated our strength and established the republic. Recognition as belligerents is what we most desire from the States and that we could never obtain if we should seek to cripple their strength. I myself have lost none of my love and loyalty for the Stars and Stripes because I have espoused the cause of Irish liberty."

"The matter has never been given serious consideration," returned Harris quickly.

"There has been a plan to seize the independent steamer Burlington, which has not been put in commission yet this spring, and is lying idle in the river, but to do so would doubtless bring us into conflict with the Michigan, so even that idea was abandoned. We shall be able to get the men across, however, when the proper time comes."

"How?"

"At the foot of Amherst street there are a number of canal boats belonging to the Kelderhouse fleet. The boats are idle at present, and influence can be brought to bear for a reasonable consideration, to secure them. On these boats the men can be transported when the proper time arrives. The same influence can secure the services of a tug to tow them across. Amherst street is so far down the river that our movements could not be detected from Fort Porter. It is foggy nearly every night now, and that in itself would be sufficient to conceal the movement."

"What is the attitude of the people of Buffalo?"

"I think we have many friends here, general, who would be pleased at our success. We have been holding public meetings in Townsend Hall in Main street, and they have been well attended by those who have not espoused our cause. There is at all times an enthusiastic interest in the proceedings."

"Do the city authorities show any disposition to interfere at the meetings?"

Henry Harris shrugged his thin shoulders suggestively, taking and lighting a fresh cigar. Then he laughed, with a knowing glance from the corner of his eye to the general.

"Don't you think we have any pull with the aldermen? There's more than one member of the Brotherhood who is on the city pay-roll! No, there's been no signs of interference yet and if there should be, you can set it down as a bluff. When is the blow to be struck, general?"

"I can't tell exactly, at this minute," General Sweeney returned, slowly. "I'm waiting to get our forces thoroughly assembled at the several points where I propose to attack. To cross at this point alone without assurance of ample reinforcements, would be useless. The attention of the British must be divided by a number of simultaneous advances of the Army of the Irish Republic. We must be active and united in our movements, giving them no opportunity to concentrate their forces. I am seeking to keep in close touch with the officers in charge at the different points and I believe everything is going well. I feel sure that within a week we shall be able to order an advance."

"I trust so, general," said Harris earnestly. "The men are quiet and orderly, as I have told you, but they are getting somewhat impatient to be doing something. They are not the sort to enjoy being held in restraint."

"I know that very well. Capt. Hynes has informed me of their disposition to recklessness. By the way, where is Hynes?"

"He was at the office this afternoon. I think he is in the city. Capt. Hynes is heart and soul in the work."

"No doubt of that. By the way, he doesn't know of my coming to Buffalo. It would be as well for you not to mention the matter."

"Certainly not, if you wish."

"I do wish, and for heaven's sake don't talk to newspaper reporters. They only need a hint to fill their columns with all sorts of predictions and forecasts. This is a critical time for us and any show of activity on our part would set the whole Canadian frontier ablaze. We must be thoroughly prepared to strike, and when the blow falls, it must be with such crushing weight that the redcoats will be staggered. From what you have told me, I feel sure that things look promising here. It only substantiates the information furnished by Capt. Hynes' cypher dispatches, only more detailed. That's what I came up here for, to learn the exact conditions, and I'm perfectly satisfied. I tell you, Harris, when I get my veterans over on the Canadian side and well supplied with mounts which the Canadian farmers must lend us for the time being, the redcoats of the Dominion will think Hell has broken loose! They won't stand against the fellows who have had four years of powder smoke and love a fight better than their sweethearts. Once we hold Mont-

real, all the forces that England can bring to bear can't dislodge us, and the Vermont men will take care of that. By the way, has the letter of the Pope caused much comment in Buffalo?"

To those not familiar with the conditions existing at the time, brief mention of the Papal rebuke to which Sweeney referred in his question, might not be uninteresting.

Shortly after the organization of the Sweeney wing of the Fenian Brotherhood, which had as its purpose the invasion of Canada, as promising most likelihood of success in the struggle for Irish independence, Pope Pius IX. addressed a general letter to those who had or were about to join this brotherhood, in substance advising or exhorting them to give it up, by dwelling upon the dire consequences which might follow, doubting that the cause justified a resort to arms, and hoping that in a spirit of true Christian resignation they would remain at peace. But the letter had little effect in restraining the Fenian leaders, at least that portion of them who were favorably impressed with the Sweeney idea of invasion. Many of the rank and file were doubtless deterred from joining the forces of their commander-in-chief, but the greater part took the view that the Pope had no voice in anything pertaining to temporal affairs, and that only in spiritual matters should they owe obedience.

"Yes, there has been some discussion of the matter," said Harris, replying to the general's question, "but the letter has had little effect up-

on those who pathy with the of the Brotherhood in preparing for very serious a

Sweeney looks ends of his finger gazed meditatively then observed

"Really, I expected that with the Arm Ireland has been thizes with us appears to have ing to Queen V would prevent once we have t

"I believe estly. "When

"First tra where I can be our forces. W time to fire the

"I am sorry not remain for a big meeting, not only have would give you of the state of

"Oh, I know Sweeney confid

who have been outspoken in their sympathy with the movement. In fact, the members of brotherhood have been too deeply absorbed in the struggle to give the matter serious attention."

Heaney leaned back in his chair, placed the tips of his fingers together, twirled his thumbs, and meditated at the ceiling for a moment, then served :

"Generally, I doubt very much if His Holiness would think that the letter would have great weight with the American Catholics. He knows how he has been wronged, and I believe sympathize with us in our cause. To me the letter appears to have been written more as a peace offering to Queen Victoria than with the idea that it would prevent war. He will commend our act and have thrown off the English yoke."

"I believe so—I trust so," said Harris earnestly. "When do you return to New York?"

"Next train in the morning. I must be able to be in direct communication with all the centres. We have been laying the train, the fuse, and the fuse has come."

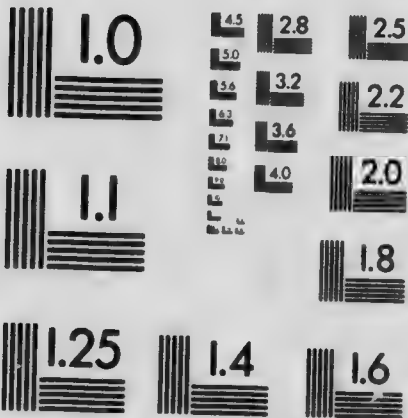
"I am sorry," said Harris, "that you could not stay here for to-morrow night. There is to be a meeting, and if you could attend, it would have a good effect upon the men, but I have not given you a chance for personal observation of their minds."

"I know their enthusiasm," returned Harris confidently. "When an Irishman goes



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into anything it is with his whole soul. We shall expect the Buffalo division to give a good account of itself."

"You may be sure it will. I can promise you, general, that it will," cried Harris warmly.

"I would like you to take this letter and package to Secretary O'Day," said Sweeney, drawing a bulky envelope from the pocket of his coat which lay on the bed. "There are instructions inside which will tell him how to dispose of the drawings. They are for the officers who will be in command, and are to be handed to them at the last moment before they quit this side. There is a complete diagram of the plan of campaign with the most accessible roads and the proposed line of march. You are to give these into his own hand and he is not to disclose their contents to a living soul until they are delivered to the persons for whom they are intended."

"Yes, sir, your instructions shall be carried out."

"Very well, I believe that is all. I must have some sleep, for I have been on the move constantly for the past forty-eight hours and am about beat out. I am glad to have met you again, Harris, and sorry that I failed to recognize you at first. Here's hoping our next meeting may be in Parliament House, Ottawa, and that the flag of the Irish Republic may be flying from the dome."

"With all my heart, general."

They drank, Harris lighted a fresh cigar, took the hand of the commander-in-chief in his own, their clasp tightened for a moment, then the confidante of the Secretary of War went out quietly, making his way downstairs to the hotel lobby.

He had no desire to meet anyone just then, but before he could reach the door, the keen eye of a short, thick-set young fellow who had been leaning against the clerk's desk, spotted him, and with a quick movement was at his side. Harris would have evaded him, but the young man was persistent.

"I understand that Gen. Sweeney is in the house," he said briskly. "Do you think he would see me for a minute?"

"You've made a mistake this time, King," was Harris' somewhat hesitating reply. "Isn't Gen. Sweeney in New York?"

"I think not, Mr. Harris. I have the very best of reasons to believe that he's in room No. 46 at this minute, and I thought you were going to stay with him till morning."

"Bosh! What could Gen. Sweeney be doing here? He's got other business than running about the country just now."

Harris was evidently determined to carry out his assumption of ignorance, but his effect was lost upon the sagacious hotel reporter of the Morning Record.

"He might be doing many things, but what I'd like to know is what he is doing here. There's a good fellow, Harris, loosen up."

"Look here, King," said Harris, "you know, or think you know, a damn sight too much. You and your paper can't afford to imagine anything and print it for fact. But I want to be fair with you, and if you'll keep your suspicions to yourself, I'll promise you a story for the Record within a week that will make your head swim."

And the readers of the leading Buffalo daily perused their paper at the breakfast table next morning in blissful ignorance of the fact that the commander-in-chief of the Army of the Irish Republic had passed the night in the city, had returned to New York by first train and that big news was on the tapis.

CHAPTER VI.

"SHE SAID I MUSTN'T FAIL, AND I WON'T."

It was late in the afternoon when Billy Wood, following the departure of Mr. Meredith and Marie for Toronto, uncle and niece being driven to the station of the Grand Trunk at Fort Erie, where they were to board the train, by the hired man, threw a light blanket over Firefly's back, secured it with a broad sircingle, mounted and followed them down the road in the direction of the ferry, which ran at regular intervals between the Canadian and American shore.

At first the spirited little mare was inclined to resent the imposition of having a man upon her glossy back. Seldom, if ever, had she known other rider than the loving mistress to whom the beautiful animal was greatly attached. As Billy mounted and rode down the lane toward the highway, Firefly made more than one break for liberty, but was restrained by the lad, who coaxed and petted the usually docile beast until, evidently satisfied that she could not rid herself of her unwelcome rider, the mare came down to a gentle gallop and passed around a turn of the road, with Mrs. Meredith's parting injunction ringing in Billy's ears :

"Be sure and be back early, and take good care of Firefly."

He shouted back an affirmative reply, and

then gave the mare her head. Firefly had not been exercised for a day or two and was apparently delighted with the opportunity for a chance to stretch her graceful limbs. She sped along the nearly level and well-kept road with the swiftness of the wind, and the boy, catching the pleasing exhilaration of the moment, let her go as suited her.

As a result, in a very short time, at least it seemed short to Billy Wood, who seldom had an opportunity for the enjoyment of such a superb ride, the scattered dwellings and stores of Fort Erie came into view, and the broad expanse of the Niagara was spread before him. He looked eagerly for the ferry boat and was gratified to observe that the steamer lay at her dock on the American side, but the people and teams going aboard indicating that the lines were about to be cast off.

"I'll just about have time to put Firefly in the hotel stable, and catch the next boat," soliloquized the boy. "I don't dare to leave her under the shed for fear somethin' might happen to her, and if anything should, Miss Marie'd never forgive me. Ye can't afford to displease her, Bill Wood, fer she's the best friend ye ever had—better 'n yer own mother."

He rode up to the Queen, a famous resort then as now, and around to the hotel barn in the rear, where a hostler took the little mare in charge.

"Want t' leave 'er long?" asked the man.

"Couple of hours, prob'ly," Billy returned, "but I guess you'd better put her in a box stall, for she's a little nervous an' she might get hurt 'n a narrer one. Give her two quarts of oats an' a pail of water."

Billy waited to see that his instructions were carried out to the letter, then he sauntered down to the big wooden platform which marked the ferry landing, leaning against one of the protruding piles, while the broad bowed ferry steamer was brought into her slip, the chains thrown out and the stream of passengers and teams had passed ashore, with the usual accompaniment of drivers' oaths and deck hands' objurgations.

Billy Wood's usual interest in passing events on the occasion of crossing the ferry was lost in this instance in the intense anxiety he had to reach the Constitutional Hotel in time to meet Harold Grattan. All his mind was centered on the one idea of faithfully performing the mission entrusted to him by his beloved mistress.

Speculating on his ability to do so, the red sun having by this time nearly reached the green bank of Canadian hills in the west, he was presently reminded of the letter with which he had been commissioned, and he instantly thrust his hand into the pocket where he had placed it, to assure himself of its safety.

On the instant a look of blank amazement spread over his freckled face, and a great lump seemed to have come up in his throat, choking,

stifling him. The pocket was empty, the letter gone.

For a moment Billy Wood was lost in the overwhelming consciousness of what the loss of that letter really meant. What would Marie Meredith say when on her return from Toronto she should come to him for his report? Only for a moment he sank under the weight of his misfortune, then began an eager search for the missing envelope.

Under the benches used for seats, among the piles of cordage, in every nook and corner he looked, without success. None of the passengers, who chanced to be few, had seen anything resembling a letter.

Then he thought of the hotel barn. He might have dropped it when dismounting from Firefly. He rushed to the stern, not yet noticing that the ferry was moving, only to find a broad and rapidly increasing expanse of water between the boat and the receding dock. Driven almost to desperation by the shame and mortification of his loss, he would have leaped into the river with the purpose of swimming ashore, but even as he sprang upon the low rail, a big man grabbed him by the collar and pulled him back to the deck.

"Look here, youngster, yer too young to shuffle off in that way. Come aboard and think it over."

"But I must get back to shore. I've lost somethin'," cried Billy desperately.

"That's right; they all make excuses,"

laughed the big man, "but it's too thin. Never saw anyone more determined 'n you, an' I've seen more 'n one try the same game, some ov 'em succeedin'. River's too swift here for swimmin'. Better go hum to yer ma an' not try that ag'in."

Billy was mad clear through. The idea of his contemplating suicide. His excitement was somewhat cooled by the incident, and making a virtue of necessity, he sullenly dropped into a seat and as patiently as his harrowed feelings would permit, proceeded to await the return of the boat to the Canadian shore.

As the steamer once more neared the wooden dock after nearly an hour had elapsed, an hour which seemed an age to the impatient boy, he went to the bow, and even before the iron plated bulwarks of the ferry grated against the swaying piles of the slip, he had leaped out and up, catching the fenders of the slip with his hands and climbing to the platform of the dock with the agility of a squirrel, speeding up the rising ground to the hotel like a deer.

"Back a' ready?" enquired the hostler, as the panting boy appeared at the stable door.

"Did you find it?" cried Billy.

"Find what? What ye lost, sonny? I ain't found nothin'."

"My letter. I had it in my inside pocket, an' it's gone. I thought I must of dropped it when I got off the mare. Maybe it's in the barn."

Both the stable-man and Billy looked carefully all over the barn floor and even in the stall where Firefly had been placed, but no letter, not a sign of the important envelope. Then the hostler scratched his head reflectively. Billy's real distress at not recovering what had apparently gone for good, touched the kind-hearted fellow, and with sympathy appeared to come remembrance.

"It's too blamed bad, youngster," he said consolingly. "Now I come to think on it, the clerk came out a while ago an' I seen him pick somethin' up in the driveway, somethin' white, an' put in in his pocket. I ain't sayin' it was yer letter, but it might be a good plan to go in an' ask him if he's found it."

Billy needed no repetition of the suggestion. He was off like a shot, and a moment later was inside the dingy little bar-room, where the flashily dressed young man who filled the two responsible positions of clerk and bar-keeper was busily engaged in tapping a fresh keg of lager. Billy was consumed with impatience, but he was forced to wait until the bartender had driven in the long faucet, drawn off the "wild" beer and filled the glasses of two customers who stood at the bar, before he could ask the important question.

"Hello, bub, who you lookin' fer?" the bartender asked, standing with both hands on the bar, and for the first time noticing the freckled face, the earnest eyes, which were regarding him

intently from the other side.. 'We don't sell drinks to boys in this house.'

"Did you find it?" Billy asked, the tears nearly ready to start, his voice low and trembling.

"Did I find it? What's it, kid?"

"My letter. I lost it and the hostler said he thought you might have found it. Did you?"

A look of intelligence came into the bartender's eyes, but he evidently sought to tantalize the impatient boy, for instead of answering, he went to his coat which hung upon a peg at one corner of the bar, took a long, white envelope from the pocket and began scrutinizing the address, written in a pretty feminine hand.

"That's it! That's it!" cried Billy eagerly. "Oh, please give it to me, I'm in an awful hurry."

"How do I know it's your's?" queried the clerk, with exasperating coolness. "I know the man this is addressed to, and I know you ain't him. I guess I'll have to keep it fer him."

"Please give it to me," pleaded Billy. "I'm goin' to take it to him and I'll miss him if you don't give it to me right away. Please, mister, let me have the letter."

"You'll have t' identify yer property, 'fore ye can get it. Who is it 'dressed to?"

Billy hesitated. Would it be a breach of his promise to Marie Meredith if he gave the name? Certainly it could not be, so long as her name was kept out of the affair. The bartender noted

his indecision and laid the envelope, address down, on the bar before Billy, still keeping his hand closed over it, however.

"If ye can't tell the name, ye can't get the letter," he said.

"Will you give it to me if I tell ye the name?" enquired the boy desperately.

"Sure thing."

"It's addressed to Mr. Harold Grattan, Constitutional Hotel, Buffalo. Now give it to me."

Evidently satisfied, both as to the lad's right to the letter and in his own desire to tease, the bartender extended his hand. Billy's fingers were just about to close upon the coveted envelope, when one of the men who had been drinking at the bar, became suddenly active. He sprang to Billy's side and held up his hand with a gesture of authority. The boy was startled for the moment and failed to take advantage of the opportunity presented. Before he recovered his lost ground the man, a roughly dressed, heavily bearded six-footer, who looked as if he might have been but a few days at most out of the northern lumber woods, had reached his long arm over Billy's head, seized the letter and was slowly deciphering the direction.

Now Billy Wood considered this action an unwarranted and reprehensible proceeding. He had proved his right to the little package, and this burly stranger had no claim whatever upon it. Billy was no coward, no matter how near to tears he had been but a moment before. On the

instant his Irish blood went to fever heat. He sprang in front of the big man with clenched fist and the devil of fight in his big blue eyes.

"Give me that letter!" he cried. "Give it to me, I say, or I'll hurt you! Do you hear me, you big clod-hopper?"

For answer the big man only laughed, a laugh in which was the true ring of amusement. His eyes left the letter to peer with a glance of surprised merriment from under their shaggy brows at the flushed and angry freckled face thrust towards his own, belligerent and determined.

"I guess you don't know me, sonny," he said slowly, and then paused to laugh once more. "No, I reckon if ye did ye wouldn't bluster that way, like a young turkey gobbler. I'm Dan McGonagle, I am. I make the laws an' execute 'em in Fort Erie. Goin' t' lick me, was ye? Well, that's rich, the richest I ever seen. Ho, ho; ha, ha! When ye goin' t' begin?"

"Are you goin' to give me that letter?"

There was a deadly earnestness in Billy Wood's wonderfully calm tone, which Constable Dan McGonagle would have been wise not to undervalue. There was, however, nothing about the stripling before him to cause alarm or even to suggest caution.

"I s'pose there's no harm in tellin' ye, youngster, that I've got a warrant right here in my inside coat pocket, fer this man Grattan," he threw out his broad chest and tapped the spot where the inside pocket would naturally be

located, with a pompous air. "I b'lieve you know all about that an' I reckon this letter, if he ever gets it, will tell him the same thing. So I just reckon I'll take care of that."

He made a motion as if to place the letter in company with the warrant of which he had boasted; but Billy Wood was too quick for him. Upon the bar, where the bartender had tossed it after driving the faucet into the fresh beer keg, lay the heavy mallet used for that purpose. In casting about for some weapon, Billy's eyes fell upon this rather formidable implement, and in an instant he had seized it, swung it aloft and brought it down with crushing force upon the back of McGonagle's hand which held the letter.

With a yell of rage and pain, the burly constable's hold upon the envelope relaxed and it fell to the floor, to be seized like a flash by Billy and thrust once more into the pocket from which it had been lost. McGonagle's hurt was so painful that for a moment or two he had no thought except for the mangled hand. With the bartender's assistance he walked to the sink and held the bruised and maimed member under the stream of cold water which was immediately turned on. Only for a moment, however, was his attention attracted, then he raved and swore.

"Damn the little catamount! He's gone and he's got the letter. Foller him, boys! Never mind me; run him down! Five dollars to the man who catches the young devil!"

But Billy Wood, fleet as a deer and as long

winded, had made good use of the interval. It was already after sundown and the main street of the hamlet was practically deserted. On quitting the hotel he had not directed his steps toward the landing dock. Instinctively the quick-witted lad had realized that he could not hope to cross the river by the ferry with safety that night.

A half-mile down the river, in a secluded cove, he knew that a light skiff, owned by a boy acquaintance in Fort Erie, was secured. In more than one fishing trip he had used this boat and he very well knew where the key to the padlock, which secured it to the root of a tree, was concealed. So, when the bartender and the bibulous friend of McGonagle reached the door and turned their eyes in every direction in a vain effort to discover the course taken by the fleeing boy, Billy Wood was flying like the wind down the river road in the direction of the old fort, an intervening building screened his speeding form, and to his would-be pursuers he was buried as completely as if he had plunged to the bottom of the swift river.

A half hour later Marie Meredith's messenger was above Fort Erie village, pulling the light skiff through the quiet water along the American shore, with the skill and determination of a Hanlan.

At the foot of Porter Avenue the lad, somewhat exhausted by his strenuous efforts, and fully conscious of the value of every moment,

turned his boat to the shore and pulled its bow in among a number of fishermen's boats, made fast to a low landing stage. He had brought both padlock and key, and his skiff was speedily secured, the oars hidden under a neighboring lumber pile, then he started on a run for Niagara Street.

Ten minutes after Harold Grattan departed from the Constitutional Hotel and directed his steps toward the New York Central station, into which the Lake Shore trains run, Billy Wood, breathless and flushed with eager expectancy, rushed up to the clerk's desk and enquired in anxious tones :

"Where's Mr. Grattan?"

"Hello, Billy ! Blest if I hardly knew you. How you've grown ! Ain't blacking boots now, I reckon," returned Starks, ignoring the lad's question. "Where you livin' now?"

"I'm a gentleman of leisure," returned Billy impatiently. "I want to find Mr. Grattan. Can you tell me where he is?"

"Well," said the clerk aggravatingly, "I judge he's just about boarding a train for Cleveland at this minute. You see it's just train time," nodding toward the clock. "Well, what ails the youngster?"

Before Stark's reference to the train was scarcely out of his mouth, Billy had turned from the desk and was running through the entrance opening upon the street. Two minutes later he had dashed through the train-shed gate, only to

see the westbound night express pulling out from under the smoke-begrimed roof.

His quick eye had caught the form of Grattan standing upon the rear platform, and in his eagerness to perform the duty required of him had sent out that despairing shout which Grattan had heard too late, and unmindful of the hopelessness of the attempt, had sought desperately to come near enough to the receding train to fling the letter to its rightful owner. But he had failed, and gradually the rear lights of the train became simply two points of light in the dim distance of the yard, finally disappearing altogether; then the disappointed boy, tears forced to his eyes by the pressure of his mortification, felt a heavy hand upon his shoulder and the gruff but not unkindly voice of the train-master in his ear:

"Here, bub, you'll have to get out of this. We don't want no boys hangin' around this yard. Three cars were broke into last night and a lot of cigars and tobacco took. I saw you come through the train-shed and I guess you were only tryin' to catch the train, but the road detectives are on duty and you'd have hard work makin' them believe you wa'n't here t' steal somethin'."

He led the way back toward the station and had nearly reached the steps leading up to the waiting room, before the boy found his voice.

"When's the next train west?" he asked

"Twelve-ten there's a special carryin' officers of the road through from New York, and you

couldn't go on that. Next passenger goes 4.45 in the mornin'."

"What train's that?" asked Billy, pointing to one of the outside tracks where the yard men were getting cars together, apparently making up a train.

"Oh, that's the fast freight for Chicago. They'll pull out in about fifteen minutes. They don't carry passengers, though."

Billy walked out through the station and east on Exchange street until he came to an alley which ran back from the street to the tracks, the further end being closed by a picket fence. Almost unconsciously the lad turned into this alley and abstractedly sauntered down to the fence.

He had no particular object in doing so, except perhaps to be alone to brood over the misfortune which had attended him ever since setting out upon the mission with which Marie Meredith had entrusted him.

Disgusted enough with himself, he felt, as he leaned against the pickets and looked away moodily across the yard with its network of tracks, the rails glistening here and there under the rays of the scattered switch lamps.

Two motives had prompted Billy Wood to the performance of the task he had undertaken. Paramount, of course, was his desire to please the woman who represented the imaginative Irish boy's most complete ideal of perfect womanhood. No sultana ever possessed a more devoted slave than was this impulsive, uneducated, but

quick-witted and big-hearted boy to Marie Meredith. Had he been a few years older he would have loved her hopelessly, doubtless, but none the less passionately. As it was he worshipped idolitrously. And this was the first time he had ever failed in obedience to her commands.

Beyond this was his personal regard for Grattan. The young lawyer had been kind to the lad from the time of their first meeting, and in his own mind Billy Wood had reached the conclusion that his adorable mistress would have been forced to look far and long before she would find a more desirable or appropriate mate than the athletic, clear-eyed, open-handed Buffalonian. Billy knew very clearly the purport of that letter and how necessary it was that Grattan should receive it in time to be warned of the reception awaiting him from the constabulary of the Canadian side.

"Remember, Billy, you mustn't fail!"

Miss Meredith's parting injunction seemed burned into his brain; to be ringing in his ears; to flash in letters of fire before his eyes in the blurring light of the smoking switch-lamps.

Again he glanced across the steel-ribboned yard to where the swaying lanterns of the trainmen of the fast freight were cutting the blackness of the further side of the yard, like darting fireflies. A look of grim determination settled upon his freckled face.

"She said I mustn't fail," he muttered, "and I won't. I'll take the letter to Mr. Grattan or I'll die tryin'."

At ten o'clock next morning when Harold Grattan, after a late breakfast, came out of the hotel near the station in Cleveland, and paused for a moment on the sidewalk before it to light a cigar before starting out upon the business which had brought him to the Ohio city, he glanced across the street to the Lake Shore tracks, upon which a long freight train was just pulling in from the east.

Grattan observed the train for a moment and was just turning away, when a familiar voice fell on his ear.

"Hay ! Mr. Grattan ! Hold on a minute !"

And then, his eyes following the direction of the voice, he saw a dirty, hatless, red-haired boy, evidently a tramp, drop from some undetected hiding place on the train and come running toward him.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

"Awfully sorry, miss, but that don't help the matter any. I don't doubt your story, for men in our business have a good chance to study human nature, and I believe you're telling me right ; but the rules of the road must be observed. Better look again, maybe it's tucked away in your bag there somewhere."

But it was not to be found. The Toronto ticket which Rose Grattan had purchased at the ticket window in the Grand Trunk station in Erie street, Buffalo, not more than thirty minutes before, and which she was certain she had deposited safely in her reticule, had disappeared as completely as the money which had gone as its equivalent. Worse than that, in the present emergency, all the girl's money, beyond a small quantity of small change, had been consumed by the aforesaid purchase, and here was this obdurate conductor waiting her decision regarding his ultimatum : a ticket, the cash, or quit the train.

It was an unfortunate and mortifying position in which to place a sensitive, high-spirited young woman of eighteen, and Rose Grattan felt all the shame and disgrace of it in full measure.

In the stillness of the car, for the train was at the time on the ferryboat, in transit across the river, and the rumbling of the wheels was stilled,

every word which the conductor uttered was plainly intelligible to each passenger, and their attention was centred, with all the morbid curiosity of the average public, upon the apologetic, urbane, but determined conductor and his fair passenger with the flaming face and the anxious eyes.

It was not so much the necessity of her return home that night which worried and alarmed the young woman on discovering her loss, as the prospect of being compelled to leave the train in a strange place, destitute of sufficient money to procure a night's lodging at a respectable hotel, to say nothing of a breakfast afterward.

The conductor passed along through the train and Rose Grattan, with a sigh of utter discouragement, began collecting her belongings, sundry wraps and bundles deposited in the rack above her head and in the unoccupied end of the seat, preparatory to quitting the train when it should have crossed the river and reached the Fort Erie station.

There appeared no help for it. One more protracted search she had made for the elusive pasteboard, with as little success as had marked her previous efforts. Then an idea came to her. Why had she not thought of it before? Her watch was worth several times the price of passage to Toronto. Might not the conductor be induced to accept the jewelled time-piece which Harold had given her upon her last birthday, as security for her fare? The situation was desper-

ate to demand such a sacrifice, but it was her last hope.

"Can't do it, miss," was his positive assertion when she had seized his gold-laced sleeve as he was hastening back toward the front of the car, and held up the little gold repeater with a pathetic appeal for its acceptance, seeking at the same time to press the treasured keepsake into his hand. "Can't do it, for it's against orders, and we can never tell who's aboard ready and anxious to report any violation of the rules."

"But it's worth double the value of my fare, and I would certainly redeem it to-morrow."

"I know ; I don't doubt but you would, but I've got to look out for my own job. Better make the best of it and get off. You can wire your friends in Toronto and go up on the morning train. I'd be only too glad to do it for you if I could, but I can't, and that's all there is to it."

Toward the last the conductor's tones had grown more irritable, and when he had concluded, Rose Grattan began to gather up her numerous bundles with an air of forced resignation, though there was a big sob rising in her throat and a suspicious moisture gathering in the big black eyes.

"If the young lady would accept the assistance of a stranger, I should be most happy to aid her."

During the disappointing search of Rose Grattan for her ticket and the conversation which

had ensued between that perturbed young woman and the train-man, there had been an attentive witness in the person of the athletic, kindly-faced and tawney-haired young man occupying the seat directly across the aisle.

Douglas Meredith was seldom attracted by strangers of the opposite sex, but there had been something in the slight but graceful figure draped in neat-fitting black, with its ratiner broad brimmed velvet hat, from under which he caught brief glimpses of a perfectly oval face of faultless profile, with its small Grecian nose, full red lips, firm little chin and rounded white throat, to win his attention from the first moment his blue, honest English eyes had rested upon it. He had noted, first with amusement and later with genuine sympathy, the movements of the lithe little figure during its fruitless search. He had watched the changing expression of the big black eyes, now appealing as their owner pleaded with the inflexible conductor, again flashing with something of anger at his stubborn resistance to her pleading. He had liked both expressions, but when the bright orbs began to sadden and unshed tears appeared to dim their lustre, he could no longer resist the promptings of a truly chivalrous nature, and realizing no impropriety, even if one could have been attributed, he had impulsively drawn out his own pocketbook, extracted a bill, and now held it irresolutely, half extended in the conductor's direction.

"Toronto is also my destination," he said

urgently, noting the hesitation that had quickly shown in Rose Grattan's spreading eyes, at this proffer of unexpected assistance from a complete stranger. She had drawn herself up, somewhat resentfully, quite haughtily, he thought, and he sought promptly to reassure her.

"Oh, I cannot accept charity," she finally answered, "much as I desire to reach home to-night I shall quit the train at Fort Erie."

She resolutely resumed the task of assembling her possessions. His repulse only served to strengthen his purpose.

"Charity was furthest from my thoughts," he insisted, standing now at the end of the seat and looking down at her with honest entreaty in his blue eyes, eyes in which Miss Grattan, glancing up from her preparations for departure, could not help admitting to herself, appeared entirely free from sinister motive. "I expect to remain in Toronto permanently, and if you will accept the necessary amount as a loan, you can return it to me at your own convenience at regimental headquarters. Here is my card."

She took the white pasteboard and scanned it quickly, all her woman's curiosity fully roused. Much as convention might counsel against such an unheard-of proceeding, she could not help thinking that in her extremity this stalwart, honest-eyed stranger must be a good Samaritan, sent by her guardian angel to extricate her from a most unfortunate predicament.

She felt herself yielding, and knowing that

her hastily taken position was untenable, she read the card with awakened interest and then raised to him, with an enquiring glance, her great child-like eyes, a glance in which Major Meredith read trusting confidence, but at the same time something of doubt and astonishment.

"It's very odd," she said presently, "but your name is strangely familiar. It is the same as that of a brother of one of my dearest friends."

"That give you confidence in my sincerity," he said with ready diplomacy.

"Fort Erie!" yelled the brakeman.

"You must decide quickly," Major Meredith said impressively. "I trust as a token of that friendship of which you spoke, you will continue your journey to Toronto."

"I will," she returned without an instant's consideration, though a moment later when the train was again under motion she regretted the hastily formed decision. But with his ready assistance the numerous wraps and bundles were promptly redeposited in the rack, leaving a vacant place upon the seat by her side.

"Would I be presuming too far?" he asked, and reading the assent in the black eyes, again shyly raised to him, at once proceeded to occupy it. The conductor seemed not one whit surprised and made no comment, when he came back to take the bank note which Major Meredith still held in his hand, and make the proper change.

"I thank you for your generous kindness to a stranger," Miss Grattan ventured, when the mat-

ter of her fare had been arranged to the satisfaction of the train-man. "Indeed, I am mortified beyond expression that the necessity should have arisen."

"You need not allow the matter to cause you a moment's worry," Major Meredith returned earnestly, noting the manner of her expression and the full, rich quality of her tones. "It is indeed a pleasure to me that I was able to render you a trifling service. I should never have forgiven myself had I failed to offer it. Please consider it simply in the light of a fortunate ending of what must have appeared to you an unfortunate difficulty, and blot it from your mind. Your home is in Toronto, I judge?"

"Yes, I was born and have always lived there."

"The present will be my first visit," he said. "Is it a nice city?"

"What answer can you expect to such a question?" she returned with a mirthful glance, so swift as to intercept his own in its admiring study of her face. "Didn't I say I had always lived there, and what city or place can compare with that of one's birth and lifelong home?"

"You are a loyal champion," he returned approvingly, rather pleased at her slightly heightened color, which gave added expression to the piquant face. "But I cannot quite agree with you," he continued. "I was born in England, have lived in Edinburgh and London, but this strange, busy western world has already a strong

fascination for me, though I landed in New York only three days ago. I fancy I shall like it better here than there."

"Of course men and women are differently constituted," she answered philosophically; "women have less ambition than their brothers. They are more readily content with conditions as they exist. On your side there is a natural spirit of attainment, of desire for advancement and power, and better opportunity for the realization of this natural ambition is presented in the new country than in the overcrowded old."

He glanced at her somewhat apprehensively. What manner of woman was this, with the form and face of a fairy and the reasoning of a sage?

"I believe you are a deep thinker," he said finally.

"No, I'm not," she returned brightly. "I think far too little, forming conclusions and acting upon impulse all too readily, as in a very recent case."

"That unfortunate subject again. I had hoped it was buried beyond resurrection. I judge you have strong opinions; how are they formed if you are not a reasoner?"

"I read."

"What?"

"Everything from the newspapers to Mrs. Southworth."

"The newspapers? Now I am surprised. What do you find in them to interest a young woman? The fashion articles, I suppose."

"Perhaps they are of prime importance," she admitted archly, "but I find entertaining matter in every department ; the news of the day, local and general, even the editorials."

Major Meredith laughed with almost boyish hilarity.

"The thought of your poring over heavy editorials," he said, with mock seriousness. "I had no idea women studied the newspaper columns beyond the list of deaths and marriages. What profit do you extract from the political and economic theories advanced by the editorial writers?"

"They help me to form opinions without being forced to draw so heavily upon my reserve stock of reasoning power," she replied, glancing at him demurely from under her long lashes.

"I see, you appropriate their ideas," said Major Meredith, quizzically. "Supposing you are reading two papers of directly opposite opinion on any certain subject, how do you determine which is right? Rather which do you attach to your fund of reason and argument?"

"The one which nearest conforms to my own partially formed ideas, the same as anyone else. We are most ready to believe that which it pleases us to believe."

The train thundered on across the Niagara peninsula, past St. Catharines, with its broad orchards of pear, plum and cherry trees, pink and white now with their wealth of blossoms, indicative of the fruitful season in prospect. Whenever

the cars stopped at the small way stations, there came whiffs of perfume from the apple trees through the open doors, suggestive of the beauty of the country through which they were traveling.

"I regret that I could not have made this trip in daylight," said Major Meredith, as a comingled wave of grateful odor from garden and orchard was wafted to his unaccustomed nostrils. "I imagine it must be delightful.

"Your expectations would be most fully realized," Miss Grattan returned enthusiastically. "Nearly all of this section is given up to fruit growing, and at this season it is like one great garden of flowers. It is supposed that Lake Ontario once covered this portion of Canada and the soil is very fertile. Off there to the west, if it were light, you could trace the original bank of the lake, with its terraces, showing where the water gradually receded. It is the same way until we are close to Hamilton. Just outside the city the tracks climb a hill out of the old lake bed, and are carried along on the top of the ridge for the balance of the way to Toronto. It is a most enjoyable daylight ride all the way from Buffalo."

Major Meredith was quite ready to believe this, though had he given verbal expression to his thoughts at that time he would have made known the fact that he considered this trip over the Great Western road the most enjoyable in his experience, even if taken in night time.

"I had expected to stop for a day with friends in the vicinity of Fort Erie," he said, thoughtfully, "and in that case should have gone on to Toronto by daylight. I received orders in Buffalo, however, to join the regiment to which I have recently been assigned, at once, and so was forced to forego the visit. I hope to be able to get leave of absence for a day very shortly and can then run down to Fort Erie."

He had thought first to tell her of the purposes of that contemplated visit, but with rare desire not to force his personal affairs upon what might prove an unwilling listener, he had refrained. This charming girl could have no interest in the Welland county sister of his whom he had not seen in the flesh since she was an infant and he a toddler of four, though he carried her picture not far from his heart and thought of her at that moment with all a brother's fond devotion.

But Rose Grattan had also been thinking swiftly and to some purpose. "Douglas Meredith, Edinburgh. Friends in the vicinity of Fort Erie." Might this not be the brother Marie had so many times discussed with her; wondering what he was like; how he looked; whether he was fair or swarthy. Oh, what a romance this would be were her speculations only to come true. And yet she hesitated to apply the probe, fearing that her suddenly constructed castle might prove to be but of air. Still, as she now studied her new acquaintance closely but cov-

ertly, she began to fancy a strange resemblance to that dear friend, whose going from Toronto had taken much of her own enjoyment of life away. Yes, surely there were the same clear blue eyes, the bronze hair, though of lighter shade, the straight nose and determined mouth and chin, only of larger mould. It was an impulse she could not have resisted, though she knew certain disappointment awaited her.

"Have you near relatives in this country, Major Meredith?" she suddenly asked.

"An only sister, whom, strange as it may seem to you, I have not once seen, since she was one year old. Neither she nor the uncle and aunt with whom she has resided since the death of our mother nineteen years ago. It was to visit them I had planned to stop over at Fort Erie."

She was practically sure now that her suddenly aroused suspicions were correct, but she gave no sign that the information interested her so deeply.

"How unfortunate that you were forced to defer what must have been a great pleasure. What a disappointment it will be to your sister."

"Not to her," returned Major Meredith, "for she had no knowledge of my contemplated visit. In fact I doubt very much if Marie or my uncle knew that I was on this side of the ocean. I have heard nothing from them direct for several months."

"How strange! And your sister; did you say her name was Marie?"

"Yes, that is her name."

"Oh, I am so glad!"

She spoke impulsively, and brought the open palms of her little hands together as if to give emphasis to the exclamation. "Indeed, indeed for Marie's sake I am so glad that it's turned out as I suspected from the first it would. She's wanted you so much, Major Meredith."

"You know Marie? Ah, now I understand. How blind I have been! I should have known that the dear friend of whom you spoke, having a brother of my own name, was indeed the sister I have longed and hoped to see so many years. Tell me of her!"

He turned to the excited woman beside him with sudden eagerness. She was trembling with the delicious mystery and suddenness of it all, but answered him quietly enough:

"What do you wish to know?"

"Everything! How she looks; her accomplishments; her tastes. Is she tall or short; plain or handsome?" There was all of a boy's eagerness in his tones. "Does she resemble this?"

He drew from an inside pocket a deguerreo-type, opened and held it up earnestly before her eyes. It was that of a handsome girl of fifteen, with short, crisp curls clustering about a shapely little head, and hanging low over the broad forehead.

"That is Marie," returned Rose Grattan, taking the case from his hand and studying the portrait attentively and lovingly. "The dear girl, how well I remember the day it was taken.

We were in school, and on the way home she insisted in stopping into a travelling photographer's little shop and having a picture made. She wanted me to sit with her, but I had just had my hair cut short, and as it was straight, I refused. Oh, how I used to envy her those beautiful curls. Excuse me, but how did you get the photograph, Major Meredith?"

The major colored slightly. Just how much of a confidant to make of this charming little woman whose name even he did not know and which he had not yet quite come to the point of asking, with safety, he was as yet undecided. And yet was she not Marie's friend? What better recommendation could be required? Even without that claim upon his regard, the young Englishman with the somewhat sluggish blood was quite prepared to comply with her slightest wish.

"It was sent to me several months ago by a lawyer in Buffalo with whom I had carried on a business correspondence for some time. His name is Grattan—Harold Grattan."

He may have noticed the sudden start, the quick rush of the rich, warm blood to her face which she now sought to turn away from him; but he made no comment. He was suddenly absorbed in the mental query: If this charming travelling companion of his was a friend of Marie, then she must know of the engagement and probably something of the man who had won his sister's love. Miss Grattan quickly recovered her composure and answered with a merry laugh:

"Now, indeed, is another mystery explained.

That picture was lost only a few days after it was taken, and no trace of it was ever found by Marie. That was about five years ago.

"But I have had it less than a year."

"So I understood you. It's perfectly plain that Harold Grattan took the picture and has kept it all this time, never letting Marie know."

Major Meredith was pleased with the opportunity presented.

"Do you know Grattan well?" he asked, and there was more than simple curiosity in the question.

Again the tell-tale color came into her face, dyeing cheeks and temples a vivid carmine. He observed this expression of embarrassment, and an unexplainable twinge of resentment touched him, as the idea flashed into his mind:

"She also loves Harold Grattan."

Recovering herself, and determined not yet to reveal her own identity, Miss Grattan answered with wonderful calmness:

"Yes, we were all boys and girls together. Harold and Marie were always great friends. When this picture was taken all the boys of our class were crazy to have it. It wasn't Harold Grattan alone, but Clifford Upton and two or three others. When the picture disappeared from under her desk one day, and no trace of it could be found, Marie was pretty well satisfied that either Harold or Clifford had it, but I doubt if she ever knew positively which."

"Evidently Marie did not resent the liberty taken with her property, very bitterly," said

Major Meredith, with a low laugh. "Of course you know of the engagement?"

He propounded the question gazing into her eyes direct, for he had a strangely anxious interest in knowing how she would take the reference to an undoubtedly unpleasant subject. If he had thought to disturb, or cause her to betray her real feelings, he was disappointed, for her reply was in a tone easy and unshaken.

"Of course," she said, "and everyone is delighted, except perhaps Clifford Upton. At the same time it was something of a surprise, for Mr. Grattan is not exactly wealthy, and Marie has been educated with the idea that some time she would marry some great Englishman."

Major Meredith was deeply interested in the chatter of his lively little neighbor. There was an easy freedom of expression, a disregard of convention, a charming naivete in the conversation and manner of the girl, though not the slightest suggestion of forwardness or unladylike advance.

"Wealth is a desirable adjunct, but not a necessity of a happy home," he said, in his own philosophic manner. "From what I have seen of Harold Grattan he is a fine, whole-souled gentleman."

"Then you have met him?"

"Yes, for a short time in Buffalo this evening."

"He's one of the best men in the world," was Miss Grattan's enthusiastic comment, and again Douglas Meredith wondered what was the secret of the girl's interest in the Buffalo lawyer.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE FENIANS ARE COMING."

"You must indeed know him very well and esteem him very highly," returned Major Meredith, with something of reproach in his tone.

"Indeed I do," was the prompt and unabashed reply. "Next to Marie he is the best friend I have in the world."

"Tell me of Marie," he said, an indescribable feeling of resentment against Grattan arising in his mind and causing him to desire to change the subject.

"No matter how high your expectations may have been raised, you will not be disappointed when you have met her," she returned readily with a generous loyalty. "She is a beautiful woman, and as good as she is beautiful."

"You are enthusiastic in your praise."

"Why not? You will commend my discernment when you have seen Marie. She is stately, imperious but of tenderest heart, graceful, accomplished and—and—learned."

"Now, you surprise me."

"There is no cause for astonishment. Mr. Meredith, her uncle, has no children of his own, and Marie has been the apple of his eye. I understand that he made considerable money in the lumber business in Toronto, and his means were

quite ample. When she left the city school a private tutor was employed for her, and she has been given every advantage. She is a finished musician and—and a good cook."

Major Meredith laughed again, that genial, contagious expression of mirth which was somehow wonderfully pleasing to her.

"From the sublime to the ridiculous," he said.

"Not at all," she returned brightly. "If the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, as some wise epicure has stated, then a well-laid table and palatable bill of fare, I should judge, would be something to strengthen the alliance."

"I suppose you got that out of some of those editorials you have been reading?"

"Perhaps, though it's good, common-sense, which unfortunately cannot be said of all the newspaper articles."

"But, if as you say, uncle has planned to make a wealthy alliance for Marie, why has he buried her in the solitude of Lower Ontario, instead of giving her the privileges of the best society at Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal?"

"At one time Mr. Meredith was in poor health, in fact his physician advised his entire giving up of business and if possible going into the country, where he would have absolute quiet and rest. Strange as it may seem, Marie was delighted with the proposal, and it was largely as a result of her urging that the change was made. Mr. Meredith had come into possession of

the farm which they now occupy, through some business transaction, and when it was really decided to remove from the city it was quite natural that they should go to this place. But they are not entirely isolated. They come to Toronto frequently, and occasionally spend several days at a time there. But I think Marie had other motive than the benefit of her uncle's health in desiring to get away from the city, though that of course was the principal cause."

"What was the added motive?"

"To be rid of her numerous suitors—no, I don't mean that exactly—to avoid certain admirers who made life a burden. Marie is a peculiar girl. She would be the last person in the world to treat anyone with coldness or indifference, and yet once she had made up her mind, nothing could change it. Really I believe it was to spare the feelings of others that she was anxious to get away from it all. I hope you will excuse me for speaking so freely to you, a perfect stranger, but you are her brother, and I have probably talked more than I ought, in a desire to repay you in a measure for your kindness to me."

She looked up at him appealingly. Some way her usual reticence in the presence of strangers had been completely banished in the companionship of this honest-faced, blue-eyed and stalwart young Englishman. There was something in his very presence to command respect and confidence. Beside, was he not Marie's

brother? She had never for an instant questioned the truth of that.

"I should certainly not wish you to speak less freely," he said kindly and sincerely. "I believe you are perfectly justified in giving me the information regarding my family for which I crave. You are certainly betraying no confidence and so there can be no harm."

"I am glad you think so. I am not accustomed to rattling on at this rate with chance acquaintances. I trust you will believe that."

He hastened to reassure her.

"This is an exceptional case," he said genially.

"I should judge so. You would make a good examining lawyer, but I should be a bad witness."

"How so?"

"I fail to confine myself to the questions, and the attorney would be constantly telling me not to advance ideas of my own."

"I think he would be entitled to be served with a writ of error, for your ideas appear to be particularly clear and reasonable."

"Now you are flattering," she said, quite resentfully. "I don't like that."

"What flattery? Nor I; in fact I abhor it to such an extent that I could not by any possible means be induced to employ it. But there is no occasion in your case. Does Marie ever speak of me?"

"Often, when we are together, wondering why you have never written to her."

"I think I must have been waiting for her to begin the correspondence," he said with a shade of regret in his tone. "Uncle used to write very infrequently. Of course, as a boy I thought very little about the matter. Afterward, when I went to the military academy, I had all I could do to keep up with my classes, for I was not a good student. Learning came hard. When I entered the army my whole mind was bent upon making something better than a non-com. of myself. Really I must admit that up to the time Mr. Grattan wrote me about a matter in which he thought I would be interested, and in later letters mentioned my sister, I had never thought at all seriously of the friends on this side of the Atlantic. But then I began to think and to wonder what this sister of whom I had so little knowledge, was like. Then, when at my urgent request Mr. Grattan gave me the portrait, I fell in love with the original at once and have been all impatience ever since to see her and claim a brother's rights to care for her. I had saved some money of my own, and when a commission was procurable, Uncle Wallace, with whom I had lived in Edinburgh, from the time of my mother's death, generously came to my assistance, and the way was opened for me to come to America. Then, when I knew that I was to be assigned to the Toronto regiment, I decided to say nothing but to take them all by surprise. Mr. Grattan

was in the secret and I am sure my relatives in this country have no idea that I am either an officer of the military or have any intention of becoming a resident of the Dominion. Will it be asking too much to request you not to mention the matter to Marie if you should see her before myself? I still have a great desire to meet and study her before she knows who I really am."

"You may depend upon it, I shall not betray you. But it's all so jolly," she cried with delighted eagerness. "Just like a play or a novel; yet I really hope you'll meet her soon and will induce them all to come back to Toronto permanently. Do you know, Major Meredith," she continued, bending forward eagerly, almost appealingly, "I am greatly worried to have them remain there much longer."

"Worried? Why? For what reason?"

He had detected the sudden earnestness of her tone and was impressed by her manner, her expression, which had changed from pleasant mirthfulness to a seriousness which did not sit well upon her bright little face.

"I believe they are in great danger!"

She spoke the words slowly in a half whisper, glancing suspiciously about her as if fearing that some unfriendly ear might gather her sudden confidence. Major Meredith gazed, first in something like amusement, then assured of her intentness upon the subject in mind, in wonder, approaching alarm.

"Danger? What do you—what can you mean?" he asked quickly.

"Hush!" she held up a warning finger, "some spy may hear us. The Fenians are coming!"

He had really been impressed with her earnestness and had half raised from his seat in his eagerness to learn what this imminent danger was which menaced the sister he had scarcely seen, but who was becoming dearer to him with every passing hour. But as Miss Grattan's startling revelation fell on his ear, he dropped back into the seat with an ejaculation of half disgust and burst into a hearty bovine laugh.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you had me worked up to a terrible state. "Fenians, eh? Pray, what effect could their coming or going have upon Marie?"

"Why, don't you know, they are going to invade Canada and take possession of the Government house at Ottawa. Don't you read the papers? What do you think caused your sudden summons to your regiment? If you were in Buffalo this afternoon, you must have heard what is in everyone's mouth?"

"I heard nothing on which to base alarm," he returned quietly. "This Fenian scare is nothing new. We have been hearing it ever since the war in the States closed. It won't amount to anything."

"Oh, yes it will. I know—Mr. Grattan has told me how the former soldiers of the civil war are preparing for an advance on the Dominion,

and if they come they'll be sure to overrun the country where Mr. Meredith's farm is located. Perhaps I'm foolish, but I've lain awake nights, thinking of Marie and the danger she will be in. Oh, Major Meredith, you must have Marie come away from there at once !"

"I must assure you that your alarm is causeless," he protested, realizing at last that her fear for Marie's safety was genuine. "This rumored raid or invasion, even if it should materialize, would only afford a few of our troops an opportunity for an outing. I doubt very much if the raiders would be able to cross the river, much less to advance into the country. Admitting that they did, they would not be able to work any more serious damage than the robbery of a few henroosts, before they would all be in jail."

"Don't you be so sure of that !" she exclaimed, her face reddening with enthusiasm or anger, and making her ten times more beautiful he would have declared. "The members of the Brotherhood are something more than hoodlums and chicken thieves. They are noble, patriotic Irishmen, who are going to throw off the English yoke and establish a free republic."

Major Meredith was surprised and amused, but not angered, though perhaps he felt that he should have been, to a degree. This was an entirely new character in which the little lady who had proved such an entertaining travelling companion, was now appearing. He was extracting real pleasure from studying her varying moods.

"I believe you are a rabid partisan," he said with a sly glance at the flushed face.

"I am," she protested stoutly. "I only hope they will win. I know you are an English soldier and think nothing in the world can make England bow her head ; but you will see. It will be only a question of time, and that time not long, when Ireland will have a government of her own."

"I suppose the inspiration for this reasoning is drawn from the teachings of Mr. Harold Grat-tan," he said somewhat bitterly.

"Harold thinks as I do that the question of Irish independence is one England cannot afford to ignore," she replied, apparently not noticing the implied sarcasm of his words and tone.

"Harold?" She called him by his given name with an easy familiarity which displeased him. He recalled the approach to a quarrel on this very subject with Grat-tan earlier in the evening. Was the lawyer really a Fenian sympathizer? If so, then surely no suitable husband for the sister of a Royalist! Irish blood was bad blood once freed from the redeeming quality of English loyalty. This matter must be investigated.

"Does Marie share your sentiments?" he finally asked.

"Oh, no ; at least I suppose not, though I haven't talked with her about it. In fact I haven't decided the matter in my own mind until recently. Marie has always been a genuine Eng-

lish girl and I don't believe any one could change her opinions on any subject. I know that Harold never has broached the matter to her, for he has too honest a regard for her sentiments of loyalty. I do wish she could hear him speak at one of the meetings. He's a fine orator, Major Meredith."

That familiarity with Harold Grattan's name! Major Meredith was, with his imagination in full play and this unsuspecting little chatterbox rattling on, working himself into a fine inward rage, though with wonderful self-control giving no outward sign. And yet what was this charming little Fenian sympathizer to him? Simply his sister's friend? He could not tell. He could not analyze his real feelings. Her kindly, as his lurking jealousy told him, almost affectionate mention of Grattan disturbed him, and yet why should it? He should probably never meet her again. And still, with that last thought came a sudden dread of such a possibility, so perverse is human mind and heart and conscience.

"So Grattan is one of their orators?" he said, speaking audibly, though without intent. "Surely no meetings of this character are held openly in Toronto?"

He had turned toward her once more.

"Oh, no, not in Toronto. It was in Buffalo I heard him. I believe meetings of the Brotherhood are held in our city, but they are not open to the public."

"And do you mean to tell me there are mem-

bers of that organization in the Dominion?" he asked, really astonished now.

"Why, certainly. That is no secret. It is claimed that there are fully two thousand Fenians in Canada, ready to join the ranks of the Army of the Irish Republic, as soon as the invasion is begun."

"Impossible! This matter must be reported to the authorities!" he cried, carried out of his reserve by the, to him, startling character of the revelation.

"I had forgotten that I was giving information to the enemy," she said archly.

There was a peculiar gleam in her brilliant eyes, whether of mirth, reproach or scorn, it would have been hard to determine. Major Meredith evidently translated it as the latter, for he reddened, shifted uneasily in his seat and stammered :

"Pardon me, I spoke impulsively. Certainly I shall take no advantage of your confidence, if it was so intended. But it seems so incomprehensible to me that treason would be allowed to thrive in the face of the government. As a loyal subject of the Queen and an officer in Her Majesty's service, I was impressed with the importance of the duty revealed."

"Oh, the Dominion Government knows all about the work of organization that is going on in the States, and the fact that it has sympathizers here," she said with great coolness.

"Then why has it not taken measures to

crush out the sentiment and hang the conspirators?" he asked earnestly.

"It has no jurisdiction over the conspirators, as you term them, and as for the members of the Brotherhood in Canada, even in the domain of the Queen evidence is required to make hanging a legal execution."

"Quite true, and yet men have been convicted on circumstantial evidence—yes, and executed," he persisted.

"It has been done, true enough," said Rose Grattan quietly, "but in far too many cases only to discover when too late that a most wicked and irreparable blunder has been made, the innocence of the victim being established."

It would have been quite impossible for a casual observer, or one studying her impassive face with all the enquiring scrutiny which Major Meredith was bestowing upon it, to detect any trace of aught but the most intense seriousness in Rose Grattan's flushed countenance. And yet could the now seriously perturbed officer have been cognizant of the merry twinkle which now and then played hide and seek under the long, curling lashes, or have noted the occasional twitching of the corners of the bewitching mouth, he might have doubted, more even than he did at present, what manner of maiden this graceful little figure in black really was. But Major Meredith based his judgment entirely on surface indications and rode on, in blissful ignorance that she was extracting more or less keen enjoyment

from the plainly manifest embarrassment into which she was leading him.

"Then you think there is no real danger for Marie?" she asked presently, looking up at him demurely, noting that his manner toward her had perceptibly changed and feeling perhaps some compunctions of conscience that she had carried the subject so far. Really, was he not Marie's brother, and being that was it not her better course to placate him if she had offended by her rather treasonable ideas?

"None, whatever," he returned decidedly. "If this rumored invasion should take on a shadow of reality, the Canadian troops would sweep it into Lake Erie as easily as this train clears the dust from the ties beneath it."

He spoke with an enthusiasm which pleased her wonderfully. It was evident that this smooth-faced English officer possessed much of the strength of character and determination which had raised his sister to an elevated pedestal in the more volatile little Irish girl's esteem. With the knowledge came an increased interest in and respect for the brother.

"Well, you may be right, Major Meredith," she returned in a conciliatory tone. "Perhaps the invasion won't amount to much, provided the Dominion officers are not so foolish as to neglect reasonable precautions. Gen. Napier is a competent officer and I don't doubt that even the volunteers would give a good account of themselves should they be called upon. Let's drop

the subject. I'm sure I hope there will be no needless bloodshed."

"I am quite willing to abandon a subject which certainly has given me no pleasure," he said, with a vain attempt to return to his former easy tones. "That has certainly been the only unpleasant feature of the ride. What time are we due in Toronto?"

"Shortly after midnight. Why, we are only a short distance from the station now." The train rumbled over a trestle. "That's Humber Bridge we are just crossing. It is built over an arm of Toronto bay. I assure you, Major Meredith, I have enjoyed the ride ever so much, and I haven't been a bit sleepy. It's so much pleasanter to have some one to talk to when you are travelling; don't you think so?"

And thus she rattled on, evidently determined to give him no opportunity to introduce any other subject which might prove unpleasant, while he assisted her to gather up her belongings, his mind disturbed by strange fancies, until the train came to a standstill and the brakeman's stentorian voice shouted:

"Toronto! All out for Toronto!"

As they came down to the depot platform another passenger, a slender young man who walked with military uprightness and precision, came from the smoking car, passing near them as Miss Grattan paused for a moment to readjust her numerous bundles. He half paused at the sight of the girl, gave Meredith a hurried, searching

glance, lifted his hat gracefully and politely, and passed on.

Miss Grattan met Meredith's enquiring glance and said promptly :

"One of the gentlemen mentioned in our conversation coming up. That is Lieut. Clifford Upton of the 46th, a volunteer regiment. Why didn't I think. No doubt he is just returning from a visit to your uncle's house, and if so, you could have heard from Marie direct. I'm always just that thoughtless. Do you go direct to the barracks, Major?"

"No, I have a room at the Rossin. Is it far?"

They had passed through the station into Front street by this time and she had paused as though looking for some one. He had revolved the idea in his mind of tendering his escort to her home, but could not quite reach a favorable decision. He was still in considerable doubt in just what relation he stood to her at that time, and equally uncertain as to his own feelings regarding his traveling companion.

"Only a short distance. It's at the corner of York and King streets. Wellington is the first street from this. You turn to the left and it's only two or three blocks. Oh, there comes papa! You dear old dad, I thought you were going to keep me waiting here all night. Papa, this is Major Meredith, come to join his regiment. Major Meredith, my father, Mr. Grattan."

Major Meredith promptly extended his hand to meet that of the fine-looking white-haired old

gentleman who had kissed his daughter affectionately, a familiarity that Meredith felt like resenting, and who now greeted the young officer with true Irish geniality.

"Glad to mate ye, Major Meredith, O'im sure, an' a pleasant avenin' to ye."

Meredith was impatient at the interruption. He had intended to learn her name. So far he had not even asked it. Now, however, he stepped forward impulsively.

"Did I understand you correctly?" he asked. "What the name Grattan?"

"Yes," she answered, with down-cast eyes.

"And you are—"

"Yes, I am Harold's sister, Rose Grattan."

He stood in a half-stance as she walked away clasping her father's arm. As they turned into Yonge street, but a short distance away, she looked over her shoulder to see him still standing there, and playfully waved her hand.

He raised his hat and as forms of father and daughter passed quite out of sight behind the building abutting on Yonge street, he picked up his portmanteau and turned down Front toward York, muttering half aloud:

"So she's his sister; and I believe I was half jealous of him. Douglas Meredith, you're a fool!"

CHAPTER IX.

A REMARKABLE LETTER.

Had Marie Meredith herself confronted him upon the streets of Cleveland that morning, Harold Grattan would have been no more astonished than he was when he discovered Billy Wood crawling from between the cars of the west-bound fast freight and heard his salutation.

"Hello, Billy !" he cried, with a broad smile, as the grimy lad hastened across the intervening tracks and finally stood somewhat shamefacedly before him. "When did you take to railroading ? Have you and Farmer Meredith dissolved partnership ?"

"I haven't been on the job long an' I'll give it up 's soon as I get back to Buffalo," was Billy's reply, evidently relieved by Grattan's tone of good-humored banter. He had been somewhat uncertain what his reception would be when he finally reached the man for whom he had been seeking. "It must be a thousand miles from the other end of Lake Erie here."

While speaking the boy had pulled off his cloth cap and wiped his sooty face with his sleeve, so that when he had finished and again raised his eyes to Grattan's, the latter burst into a hearty laugh at the grotesque figure presented, the face being streaked with dirt, only partially

removed by the passage of the coat-sleeve across it.

"Well, you are a nice looking boy," he said, cheerfully, "and I shall—What's that? A letter? Why didn't you say so at once? I suppose this is the document with which you were trying to flag the express down in the Buffalo station last night?"

He took the soiled and crumpled envelope which Billy finally succeeded in withdrawing from his pocket, in which, with wise forethought, born of the almost unsurmountable difficulties he had encountered in his efforts to deliver it, he had securely pinned the missive before attempting to board the freight as it was moving out of the Buffalo yard.

"I thought ye ought to have it, Mr. Grattan," said Billy, desperately. "an' I just made up my mind I'd get it to ye if I had to foller ye to San Francisco."

"You're a bully boy, Billy," said Grattan, giving the lad a commendatory slap on the shoulder, "but it wasn't worth all the trouble. I knew all about this thing two days ago, and it won't make a particle of difference about my going across the river."

He had torn open the envelope and with a single glance had noted, as he thought, the most important item of the letter's contents.

"Now you come right along up to the hotel with me," he continued, thrusting Marie Meredith's communication into his coat pocket, tak-

ing Billy by the arm and turning his face in the direction indicated. "A bath and a good breakfast will be just about what you need most, and then we'll talk it over."

The clerk and the few loungers in the lobby observed with some curiosity the well-dressed man and the shabby, dirty boy, with strands of bright red hair falling over his forehead and a shame of his appearance in the big blue eyes, but Grattan hurried him up the stairs and soon had him in his own room.

"Now, you get right into that bath-room, youngster," he commanded, when he had locked the door, for Billy had dropped into the nearest chair from very exhaustion. "It'll rest you wonderfully, and you must be tired to death. I'll order up a good meal and it'll be ready by the time you get rid of that coat of coal dust. Then we'll decide what we're going to do next, while you get something inside of you to brace you up. It's mighty lucky Cleveland wasn't ten miles further away," he continued, as Billy vanished. "If it had been it would have been an undertaker instead of a cook the lad would have required. It was a plucky thing for him to do, and he shall have all the credit that is his due when I see the woman who sent him, bless her anxious heart."

He rang the bell for the waiter, gave the order which would assure Billy a substantial repast when his ablutions were completed, the splashing heard in the direction of the bath indicating that the boy was wasting no time. Then

Grattan, taking a seat near the window. took out the letter and read it every word. It was as follows :

At Home, May 29, 1866.

Dear Harold :—

Billy has just brought me some most astonishing information he obtained at the Corners, where he went this morning to have the horses shod. While I can scarcely bring myself to believe that it can be true, I am none the less greatly worried, for some very remarkable things have come to my ears during the past few hours. Billy says there is a warrant out for your arrest and that the Welland county constables are ready to take you into custody the minute you set foot on this side of the river. My heart tells me, dear one, that there must be some terrible mistake, that you could not so far forget your own manhood and your love for me as to conspire against your Queen. Send me a line, a single word to assure me that it is all a base slander. Now, you will think I doubt you, that I am compelled to believe the terrible things they have been telling me. Do I? I hope not. oh, I hope not, and yet your long stay at St. Albans and your sudden call to Cleveland all seem strong evidence against you. No, I will not believe them; I must not, cannot have it so, for if you are disloyal it would break my heart! I have sent this letter to you to warn you of your danger. Have I done wrong? If, as they claim, your sympathies and

energies are with the mistaken enthusiasts who would seek to overrun our fair Canada, then I would be the first to give you up. And yet you know that my whole soul's existence rests with you—that I cannot live without you! Forgive me for writing as I have, but Harold, dear, they have driven me beyond the endurance point. I am going to Toronto to-night, and shall have a good cry on Rose's bosom. I must have sympathy or I shall die. Come to me as soon as you possibly can—no, don't come until this horrible thing is explained away. If it cannot be, then—then—don't come at all. I scarcely know what I am writing. I am so disturbed, and I don't dare read for fear that I should not have courage to send it. I do not doubt you, dear, but let this be the evidence—I trust your word—tell me that they do not know, that you are not what they would make you appear—an agent of the Fenian Brotherhood and a spy—oh, that hateful word—against your Government! I haven't the time or the heart to write more. I shall wait for you and pray for you, and when you come will ask you to forgive me for the unworthy thoughts I have allowed to creep into my mind, and if you come I shall know that I am forgiven.

With love always,

MARIE.

Did ever accepted lover receive such letter before? This Harold Grattan mentally asked himself as he read and re-read the somewhat in-

coherent message. Could it be possible that sudden accusation against himself, coming suddenly to her sensitive mind had served to weaken a more than normal intellect? The thought gave him a sudden chill. Was there not that other with the name of Meredith wandering in the uncertainty of a clouded understanding as a result of sudden overpowering grief? In that brief glance at the missive walking up to the hotel with Billy Wood, he had not caught its real import. He had only noted the underscored lines, the reference to the warrant. He had not gone beyond that, for his attention was absorbed by the condition of fatigue that the boy had manfully struggled against, which had at that instant made itself very apparent.

But now as he read and digested every word, going even beyond that and reading between the lines, he realized that something serious had transpired to so strangely affect the woman whose will-power and unexcitable nature had been the admiration of her acquaintances. "They?" Who were they who had dared to slander him in the regard of the woman he loved and who had promised to become his wife. Oh, it would go hard with them indeed, once the identity was established!

Then the demon of jealousy came to his ear. Might this not be a shrewd woman's trick to break an engagement which had become distasteful? After all the sex was an inscrutable, unexplainable, mystifying problem; her nature an

elusive, intangible, undependable element in the laboratory of human life, as likely to be proven elastic as rubber, or as firm as steel. Marie was of that class specially fitted by nature to dissemble without betraying her true feelings, if it so pleased her. Had her protestations of affection been real or simply the hollow mockery of a coquette's caprice?

He read the strange and disturbing letter through again.

There could be no mistaking the heart agony written in every line. But there must have been strong cause to wring such anguish of soul from his proud, imperious, brave Marie! He sprang up, pressed the letter to his lips, folded it carefully and placed it tenderly next his heart. Then he stepped to the bath-room door:

"Your breakfast will be up very soon, Billy. When you're through, ditch right into it. I'm going down to send a telegram, and will be back in fifteen minutes, then we'll have a good talk. Hurry up, now!"

"All right, Mr. Grattan; I'm dressin'."

When Grattan returned the boy was carrying out the former's instructions to the letter, and had "pitched in" with such thorough earnestness that the generous repast had nearly vanished.

Grattan lighted a cigar, threw his six feet of humanity into an easy chair, and said quietly, though burning with an anxiety entirely new to his well-controlled organism:

"Now, fire ahead, Billy. I want you to tell

me everything that has occurred at Mr. Meredith's since I was there. Don't you dare omit a single thing."

Thus admonished, Billy Wood crammed his mouth with the last morsel of buckwheat cake and maple syrup upon which he had been bending his gastronomic energies, leaned back with a sigh of supreme satisfaction, and in his characteristic manner, truthfully, though with some elaboration, related the incidents of Lieut. Upton's visit, so far as he knew them, and subsequent events up to the time he had hailed Grattan from his somewhat perilous position on the fast freight, all of which are already known to the reader. And then, when he had finished, and Grattan had asked some questions relative to minor details of the story, and Billy had answered them with a keenness of perception and ready appreciation of their significance, Grattan had sprung up, passed to the boy's side and taking the caloused brown hand in his own and pressing it warmly, had cried with the strong sincerity of an honest man :

"Billy Wood, you are all right ! You are a brick ! You have no business plodding away on a farm. I'm going to take you into my office and make a lawyer of you, do you hear ? One of the best lawyers in Erie County."

The freckled face flushed with genuine pleasure from chin to temple, for from no one, save perhaps Marie Meredith, could praise be more delightful to the practically friendless boy than

from the man standing there clasping his hand. the flash of his eye, the entire expression of his honest countenance betokening the pride he felt in the boy's persistence and discernment.

"I tried to do the right thing. Mr. Grattan," Billy finally stammered, "but I'm afraid they won't take good care of Firefly. If anything should happen to the mare, Miss Marie'd never forgive me."

"You did just exactly the right thing," Grattan replied convincingly. "I wouldn't have had you done differently, nor would she. Don't you worry about Firefly. She'll be cared for, never you fear, and I'll take care of the bill. But of course Mrs. Meredith will be worrying that you don't return, and I think if you are rested enough, you had better go right back on the first train, which must be about due now. You can sleep on the train going down if you wish, and will be in good shape by the time you reach Buffalo."

"Oh, I'm all right," was Billy's quick answer. "I don't feel a bit tired now."

"I thought that bath and breakfast would fix you out. Suppose we go over to the station and find out about the train."

"Train due in fifteen minutes," said the agent, as Grattan tossed a bill on the window shelf and asked for a first-class ticket. "Yes, she's on time."

"Now, look here, Billy," said Grattan earnestly, when he had taken the boy into a retired

corner of the station, and the two were seated, "I shall depend upon you to make things straight at home. I have great faith in your judgment and loyalty to Miss Meredith. I want you to tell her that Harold Grattan hasn't done and won't do a solitary thing that she won't think is right when she knows. There are people who will try to make her believe that I'm working for the Fenians and getting ready to lead a regiment, perhaps, into Canada. Tell her not to believe a thing except what she sees; that I am just as loyal to my government as she to her's. This warrant which has caused her so much uneasiness isn't worth the paper on which it is written, and if fifty constables were waiting on the other side of the river to arrest me, I should come just the same, just the minute the case I am working upon would permit. Tell her not to worry one particle; that even if there should be a Fenian raid there will be no danger to the people who are not found with arms in their hands. Tell her that the members of the Brotherhood are honest men, who sincerely believe they are in the right and that if the Army of the Irish Republic crosses the river, it will be under direction of competent officers, who will see to it that no harm is done to peaceful citizens. Can you remember all this, Billy?"

"I sure can," was the lad's confident answer, "and I'll tell Miss Meredith every word. But do ye think, Mr. Grattan, that the Fenians will really come?"

Grattan regarded him gravely for a full minute before replying. When he did speak, it was with serious manner and in a low tone.

"I am sure I can trust you, Billy, not to repeat a word of this to anyone, for if you did it might be worse for me when those waiting constables get in their work. You'd be likely to be called as a witness against me, don't you see? Yes, Billy, I do think there's bound to be trouble of that sort; in fact, I shall be greatly surprised if you don't find the Fenians in Canada inside of two days!" Billy's eyes opened wide. "Well, there comes the train, and we'll have to say good-bye. Don't forget a single word I told you to tell Miss Meredith, my boy, and remember—the best lawyer in Erie county."

Grattan stood and watched the east-bound train meditatively, until it had passed out of sight around a bend of the irregular lake shore. His mind was far from being at ease, though he had endeavored to put the best possible face upon the matter for the benefit of the lad who had just left him, confident in Grattan's assurances that no danger threatened him, but considerably disturbed by the lawyer's parting confidence.

"That boy is true as steel," was Grattan's mental comment as he retraced his steps across the tracks, turned to the left instead of returning to the hotel, walking up Summit street to Seneca and following this thoroughfare for some distance in the direction of the Square, coming finally to a small wooden building, fronting on

the street, with a narrow alley or lane running back alongside the house to a smaller barn or shop some distance in the rear. Pausing at the entrance of this lane, Grattan halted, drew a folded slip of paper from an inside pocket of his vest and opening it, studied a rude drawing sketched in pencil upon the surface, intently.

"Yes, that surely must be the place," he commented, with a comprehensive nod which took in the building in front which was apparently a notion store, the lane and the insignificant structure in the rear. "It answers all of Barrett's description even to the wooden pump in front. Let's see · this fellow's name should be Jennings—William Jennings. I'm certainly in right on this for there's the sign: 'W. E. Jennings, Provisions and Yankee Notions.' Not a suspicious place by any means. I'll go in and interview Mr. Jennings."

A tall, thin man, with a shiny bald head and a little bunch of whisker under each ear; a man of fifty perhaps, with keen little eyes and the patronizing manner which usually characterizes the small tradesman, came forward from a desk where he had been poring over a big book, apparently a ledger, but out of all proportion in size to the visible business of the establishment, and waited expectantly.

Grattan took a step forward, pausing directly before the proprietor of the store, gazed fixedly into his eyes, raised his right hand in the direction of his heart, made a quick, almost imper-

ceptible downward gesture and extended his hand.

A look of quick intelligence came into the storekeeper's ferret-like eyes, and he promptly met Grattan's advance, clasping the latter's hand with both his own and speaking as he did so a single word, "Erin."

"Go bragh," was Grattan's answering salutation and then the two men's hands fell apart.

"We are quite alone," the proprietor of the store observed as he led Grattan toward the rear where some chairs were placed, took one himself and motioned his visitor to another. "What would the brother have?"

"How is the work moving?" Grattan asked.

"Every train from the south and west brings its quota," was the low reply. "Three hundred men go forward to-night."

"They will be needed. You have a list; they all pass your eye. Am I not right?"

"I am the recruiting officer of this district. I shall go into the field once the first telling blow is struck. I have a complete record of enlistments and I'm not ashamed of the work I have done for the glorious cause. Look here!"

He stepped to the desk, raised the ponderous ledger and turned the thick leaves rapidly, Grattan observing as he did so that the pages were nearly written full of names, alphabetically arranged under the proper indices.

"There is one man," said Grattan, "whom I have good reason to believe is entered here,

and whom I am extremely anxious to locate. His name is George Merton. Have you any remembrance of that name having been registered?"

"Merton? Merton? That name does sound familiar. Ah, yes, here we have it: George Merton, Louisville; served with Kirkpatrick two years. Now, I come to think of it," the storekeeper said reflectively, "I remember that man distinctly. He came here entirely alone, and my attention was attracted to him from the fact that he was apparently the oldest man yet enlisted. He was quite stout, his hair iron gray; he must have been all of fifty. He brought with him a letter from the Civil war commander which spoke of his almost fanatical bravery. Why, that man has been staying right here in my barracks since his enlistment two days ago. He has been very restless and anxious to be ordered to the front. That is the way he expresses it. The men are all out now, though. I'm afraid to have them stay around during the day for fear the Federal authorities might become suspicious. They come in singly after dusk, and no one is the wiser that my barn has been the temporary home at intervals, for about a thousand Sons of Ireland. During the day the men are scattered about the city. If you were to call this evening, I could arrange to have Merton come to the store and you could have a talk with him if you desire. Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing at all. Do you remember his features quite well?"

"Very distinctly."

"Does he look like this?"

Grattan drew a photograph from his pocket and held it before the eyes of the storekeeper.

"Exact picture," was the prompt reply, "only a trifle thinner and older now. Yes, that's Merton; not a doubt of that."

There was a glow of satisfaction on Grattan's face as he shook Jennings's hand, with a promise to call again in the evening, and left the little store which with all its modest appearance was conducting an enormous business—not in the sale of cookies and notepaper, but in the mobilization of the forces of the Army of the Irish Republic.

From the recruiting office of the Fenian Brotherhood Grattan went up into the more aristocratic portion of the city. He strolled down Euclid avenue, that famous boulevard which has few equals as a thoroughfare for driving in the United States. He walked on for a long distance, but he had no thought for the handsome residences, the gay equipages or the beautiful pedestrians whom he frequently passed. His entire mind was centered upon that one country Canadian home and her who had doubted while loving, and doubting, he believed, would love the more when all doubt was removed, as it surely would be in the end. Of her he thought and of the mission which had brought him to this Ohio town.

"There can be no doubt now," he said, "and

a gleam of satisfaction was in his dark eyes. "it has been a long and brave chase, but the game is run down at last. I must wire Major Meredith and tell him how glad that we have been working for has been accomplished. I will wait, however, until I have had a chance to talk with Merton and judge of his present condition. I wish this invasion project of General Merton could be held up for a week longer. I'm afraid it will interfere with our plans and perhaps delay the consummation of our hopes indefinitely. Well, it will be time enough to cross the bridge when we come to it. This trip has been well rewarded and I suppose I ought to be satisfied, though I'm anxious to have a talk with this man Merton; if he will talk. Guess I'll get some dinner and be ready to go back to Jennings' early. By George, that saucy Irishman is the last person in the world whom the authorities would suspect of conducting an underground railroad."

Grattan retraced his steps in Euclid avenue, turning into the Square at the Superior street entrance, and walking rapidly along the shaded foot-path toward Seneca street. There was an irresistible impulse to remain in the neighborhood where he was so soon to have the opportunity of meeting the man whom he had been seeking over a half-dozen states for several months, and who up to this time had proven as elusive as a veritable will-o-the-wisp. So presently he found himself in a cheap restaurant, not more than a quarter of a mile from the recruiting station.

Waiting for his order to be filled, an exasperating experience it proved. Grattan once more fell to pondering upon the revelations he had extracted from Billy Wood, and a frown settled upon his usually unruffled face as the part Lieut. Clifford Upton had played in Billy's story was suddenly realized. Of a certainty here was a feature of the case which might cause alarm, and Grattan brought his clenched fist down upon the frail table before him with a force which threatened to demolish the pine top, and caused the few patrons of the place to regard the man who had startled them with his vehemence, with considerable of apprehension.

"He's a fine specimen," Grattan growled, under his breath, his lips compressed, his eyes flashing. "Thinks he'll settle my case so far as Marie is concerned; but he'll find he don't stand deuce high in that game. And yet who else could have talked to her in a way to make her doubt? Oh, Lieut. Clifford Upton, I'll have a score to settle with one member of the dashing Queen's Own, that will be collected principal and interest, my fine fellow—principal and interest!"

He finished his meal, paid the score at the cashier's desk, and went out into the street once more, his mind suddenly weighted with bitter, revengeful thoughts. A sudden impatience had come over him to get back to Buffalo and cross the river to the Canadian shore; to confront his accusers, to plead his own case with the woman whose usually inflexible mind had apparently

been impressed with the partial conviction of his deception. Could he make her believe? Surely there could be no proof, and yet——

There was the letter from General Sweeney, the letter which had so mysteriously disappeared from his desk in the Buffalo office some weeks before—the letter which, misunderstood, might so readily be interpreted as evidence that the charges of treason were well founded. Could it be possible that the man who had sought and was seeking to supplant him in Marie Meredith's affections, knew aught of this?

It seemed improbable, and yet Upton had called upon him while on a visit to Buffalo, had been in his office showing somewhat ostentatious effusiveness in his congratulations on the engagement which had been but recently announced in the society column of a Toronto paper. Grattan now remembered with suddenly aroused perception that he had been called out of the office during the time of Upton's visit, and that he had excused himself to his caller, had been absent for fully half an hour, and that during that time the young officer had remained in the office, awaiting his return with no indication of impatience. Suspicion once aroused strengthens rapidly, especially if it has something tangible upon which to feed, and Grattan was never slow at making deductions.

Then he resolutely put the thought of Upton's possible duplicity from him. Rival though he might be for the love of that royal creature who

in the years of the past had been playmate and friend of both, Grattan's generous nature could not allow him to long harbor that ugly doubt of the young officer's honor. The thought was preposterous, his better nature promptly told him.

Harrassed by conflicting and increasingly unpleasant thoughts, Grattan turned his steps once more in the direction of the Lake Shore station. He had now in mind to send a telegram to Major Meredith. He, of course, would hear all this apparently incriminating testimony, which had affected even his not easily influenced Marie, and would doubtless be quick to believe, especially after that experience in the lobby of the Constitutional Hotel, where a discussion of the same unpleasant subject had been in a fair way to cause a rupture between the two. Meredith, at least, must be set right in the matter.

As he came out of the telegraph office and stood waiting for a long freight train which blocked the street crossing to pass, his attention was attracted by a group of roughly dressed men who were coming up Summit street, having just turned into that thoroughfare from Seneca. They were about a dozen in number and came along in regular squad formation, like soldiers. The next moment they passed out of sight behind the panting locomotive, from which the steam was already beginning to escape, showing that the engineer had opened the throttle.

A sudden suspicion flashed into Grattan's mind and regardless of personal danger he seized

the iron stable on the side of a box car, swung himself to the bumpers and jumped through between the now moving cars to the plank walk on the other side.

He looked for the men, as soon as he had recovered his balance, but they had disappeared. Glancing at the train he observed that a car near the engine had an open door and sitting in the opening upon the car floor, their feet dangling outside, were three men, apparently a portion of the squad he had seen marching in Summit street.

At that moment the man nearest him, a tall, heavily built individual, with a broad but somewhat cadaverous face, a high forehead, from which the slouch hat was pushed back carelessly, with deep-set but feverishly bright eyes gleaming out from under overhanging brows, and heavy, iron-gray locks falling to his massive shoulders, turned squarely toward him. Grattan started back with a cry of surprise and concern :

"By heaven, it's Merton ! There was no mistaking that face ! Either Jennings sought to deceive me or the invasion has really begun."

And, then, as the red caboose of the train swept by, a cloud of dust whirling in its wake, Grattan turned in the direction of his hotel with an ejaculation which sounded strangely profane, for it would be fully five hours before the next train would depart for Buffalo, and a host of disagreeable things might transpire in that period of time.

CHAPTER X.

MARIE SEEKS A CONFIDANTE.

In a pleasant section of the South Park district in Toronto, Patrick Grattan had purchased a vacant lot and, caused to be erected, with the few hundred dollars which had come to him from his father's Irish estate, a comfortable two-story cottage. He had painted it white, with green blinds, and had enclosed the lot with a paling, also white, and from the day of its completion to the time of our story some thirty years later, the white cottage and paling and the green blinds had never been allowed to become dingy, the careful owner zealously protecting its constant newness from the encroaching hand of time.

A model of neatness, and a cosy, delightful home, it came to be, when Patrick had brought the prettiest colleen in Tipperary across the broad Atlantic and had installed her mistress of the white cottage and all that it contained.

Here the boy and girl, Harold and Rose, her children and his, had been born, had marred the immaculate palings with their childish playthings, for which there had been chidings, but no worse punishment, and had grown to man's and woman's estate before the rose flush had entirely faded from the cheek of her who had made Patrick Grattan's life as free from unhappiness as

his own habitation was from the marks of desecrating hands.

The first flaw in a perfect home life had come when Harold had gone to Buffalo to study law and had later, after being admitted to the bar, opened an office in that city across the border. He came home frequently, often on business, for many who had known the ambitious boy and his earnest efforts to gain a profession had thoughtfully given him something in the way of legal work when they could do so without risk of personal loss, and later, perceiving his shrewdness and industry, more substantial patronage. But for all his frequent home-comings there was always that knowledge of absence, which to fond hearts is a constant breeder of unhappy thoughts.

But the worst blow of all had fallen when Mrs. Grattan had suddenly sickened and died within three days, and father and daughter had been left alone in the little cottage, which had never before felt the shadow of a real sorrow.

Patrick Grattan had begun to make his way in the new world as a freight handler in a large warehouse, having invested his little fortune in the white cottage, but had proven himself a faithful employee and had gradually been advanced to more responsible and lucrative positions with the firm, in which son had succeeded father, but in which his own services had been continued.

So, when the mainstay of the family had been summoned to her rest, Rose had been forced to

give up her position as a teacher and take upon her young but brave shoulders the responsibility of keeping her father's house for him, with something like the same devotion and as nearly as possible in the same manner, as had she from whom her knowledge of housewifely duties had been transmitted.

On the day preceding the evening on which Rose Grattan had met with her peculiar adventure on a Great Western train, the evening when she had been plunged by a reckless fate into an acquaintance with Major Douglas Meredith, she had gone, at her father's request, to Buffalo, to seek to learn something of her brother's whereabouts, and the cause for his neglect of business, a neglect which, perhaps greatly magnified, had been communicated to Patrick Grattan by the man of whom Lieut. Upton had spoken at the Meredith dinner table.

She had by good fortune met Harold at his office, where he had called for some papers on his return to the city from St. Albans and previous to his going to the Constitutional, and in the few minutes of time they had been together he had fully relieved any apprehensions she might have felt as to the wisdom of the course he was pursuing.

She had informed him of Sayles' uneasiness regarding the railroad claim case and he had laughed.

"Sayles is a rank pessimist," he had said, rummaging in his desk meanwhile for the docu-

ments sought, and at the same time accidentally becoming cognizant of the fact that the General Sweeney letter was missing, a fact, however, which did not cause him to betray his surprise or wrath. "Now, Sis, I'm working on a case beside which Sayles' little damage suit fades into insignificance. Just you trust your uncle. He knows what he's about, and if Sayles is dissatisfied with the service I'm giving him he is at perfect liberty to get another lawyer."

He had not given her an inkling of the character of the important matter occupying his attention, possibly had he done so it would have been wiser; perhaps have prevented much of the suspense, uncertainty and dread which was to come as a result of his secrecy to two women, both of whom loved and sought to trust him, even when the clouds of suspicion settled most thickly over him.

He had made no mention of the man whom he was expecting to meet previous to his departure for Cleveland. He had, in fact, parted from her rather hurriedly in the street in front of his office, and Rose had gone to the house of a girl friend to pass the time until the Toronto train departed, instead of to the hotel where Harold lived when in Buffalo, and where he usually urged her to go.

But she had consoled herself with the thought that her brilliant lawyer brother was at last interested in a case of importance commensurate with his talents and legal ability, and her proud

little heart beat with something of exultation as she reflected that perhaps the opportunity they had all been hoping for so long had really come at last.

To say that she was surprised when Douglas Meredith had mentioned her brother and the fact of having met him earlier in the evening, does not begin to express her condition of mind, but with the surprise came a sort of confirmation of her previous optimistic inference. If the service of Harold was sought over in England, then indeed he must really be coming to the front in his profession with a vengeance, and her foolish little brain was set to work on most ambitious imaginings for his future.

As she had satisfied her own mind of Harold's own good judgment, so also had she quieted any mistrust that might have been kindled in that of her father, who equally proud of the son as Rose of the brother, rubbed his hands together in his elation when she had told what she knew of Harold's legal expansion, and had exclaimed exultingly :

"An' shure, Harold's the bye that kin do the thrick, if it's wan that takes brains an' worruk !"

It was nearly sundown of the day following the night of the memorable ride from Buffalo. Rose Grattan had cleared up the little supper table and had seated herself at the piano, playing snatches of some of the popular airs, her mind divided between the music, her traveling

companion of the previous evening and the brother who ran away to Ohio on some mysterious but surely important business. Patrick Grattan sat on the back verandah, smoking his evening pipe and regarding with satisfaction the carefully arranged garden in the rear of the cottage, which was beginning to show results for the care bestowed upon it by the proud owner.

Between the noise of the piano and her own vagrant thoughts, Miss Grattan failed to hear the wheels upon the soft street, which stopped before the gate of the cottage, the light patter of running feet upon the gravelled walk or the opening of the door.

It was only when two warm, soft hands covered her eyes and the familiar perfume of lily of the valley floated in the air, that she became conscious that she was not alone. Then all doubt of the personality of the stealthy visitor was set at rest as a musically sweet voice exclaimed :

"What atrocious music, dear ! Why in the world don't you play something, Rose ?"

"Marie Meredith ! Where did you come from ? The last person I expected to see and the one I most desired. You dear, darling girl ! I've been thinking about you all day and wishing for you. Just let me look at you !"

She had sprung up, still retaining the hands which had been pressed upon her eyes, and facing Marie Meredith, black and blue orbs met in a gaze of affection and warmest welcome.

"Well, this is a pleasant surprise," Rose Grattan continued, proceeding to divest her visitor of her hat and cape, and leading her to a big easy chair, seating herself upon the arm and placing her two hands on Miss Meredith's shoulders, devouring the fair face with hungry eyes. "Why didn't you let me know? Did you come alone? I do hope you intend to make us a long visit?"

"I hadn't the time to send you word after I decided to come," Marie returned, somewhat wearily. "Uncle was obliged to come on business, and I—well, I thought perhaps the trip would do me good, so I came along. We are going home to-morrow afternoon, and I want you to go with us, Rose. Will you?"

There was a tender pleading in the tone which surprised and somewhat alarmed Rose Grattan. Now, as she noted the slight quiver in the usually strong, clear voice, she suddenly straightened back to the length of her arms and bent a searching, enquiring glance to the pale, as she now discovered, somewhat wan and sad face.

"Why, what on earth has happened, Marie?" she cried impulsively, laying one hand upon the bronze waves of her friend's hair, brushing it back from the white temples with tender, caressing movement. "I hadn't noticed before, I was so glad to see you, but you're actually pale and look as though you had lost the last friend you had on earth."

"I'm afraid I have, dear, unless you are still

my friend," was the disconsolate reply. "Oh, Rose, pity me and tell me what to do !"

Then the proud head, with its crown of dull gold was pillowed upon Rose Grattan's plump shoulder, and a flood of tears threatened to deluge that surprised young lady's stiffly starched and immaculately white linen collar.

It was all a great, shock to the little Irish girl. Never before had she witnessed evidences of weakness on the part of Harold's fiancée ; never from the time they were children together had she beheld those royal eyes dimmed with tears except when together they had stood by the bier of her own loved mother and Marie's friend. Here, surely, must be supreme sorrow or—or—what ?

"You certainly cannot doubt my friendship, dear," she finally returned with earnest assurance. "You know I would do anything—anything, Marie, dear, to save you annoyance or pain. What is it ? What has happened so terrible, to make you like this ?"

"And I loved him so—I do love him so !" came piteously from the lips buried in the ruffled lawn at Rose's shoulder.

Gradually the light of comprehension came into the black orbs bent in pitying tenderness upon the swaying, almost hysterical form. Rose Grattan was a wise and discerning little woman, and she intuitively guessed, and very correctly, that her brother was in some manner connected with or responsible for this torrential exhibition.

So clasping the graceful form fondly in her strong, young arms, she bent her lips to the weeping girl's ear and whispered, coaxingly :

"Tell me what it is, dear ! What has that horrible brother of mine been doing now ?"

"I don't know—I don't know !" came the convulsive answer. "Oh, Rose, if I only did know—if I only did know !"

"Then it is Harold ?"

"Y-e-s, yes—it's Harold."

"Then tell me," and there was less of sympathy, more of command in the now thoroughly aroused girl's tone, "what has caused the trouble. Surely you cannot doubt Harold ?"

"No,—that is, I don't want to—but—but—Oh, Rose, tell me what to believe ! I'm so harassed with doubts,—doubts of myself and—and of him,—forgive me, Rose—of Harold !"

Rose Grattan did not at once reply to this outburst. In fact she hesitated to utter the words which leaped to her nimble tongue. She was not angry, scarcely that, yet she felt deeply grieved and hurt that Marie Meredith—she of the strong will and unwavering loyalty—should have changed so sadly, should for a single instant dare to harbor a thought other than of absolute confidence in the unswerving integrity of the man she had promised to marry. But up to this time the citadel of Rose Grattan's heart had never been successfully assaulted by any knight bent upon love's crusade. Perhaps it was impregnable—perhaps—

She had released herself from Marie Meredith's clinging arms, had surprised that young woman almost out of her piteous grief by allowing her to drop back upon the cushioned back of the chair, and had sprung to her feet, confronting her friend with something akin to scorn plainly showing in her flashing eyes, hot resentment in the flushed cheeks. Was this weeping, pleading, doubting creature the strong, masterful, regal woman whom it had been her greatest pride to think her noble, handsome brother had won against all competitors?

Her action, the attitude of defiance, the written resentment of the flaming face, carried to Marie Meredith's consciousness, as surely as the well-aimed shaft from the bow, more forcibly even than words could have done, the verdict of accusation and did far more to restore her to a normal condition of calmness and self-restraint, than continued sympathy or mingled tears could have done. In an instant she was herself once more, all traces of her former unusual agitation gone, save for the flush on cheeks and temples brought with the consciousness of merited rebuke.

"Forgive me, Rose! I have been unjust—unintentionally, but none the less unjust—to you and to him. Yet they seemed so certain—even uncle and aunt believe that the story is true. Then the warrant—I tried to fight against the suspicion—I put it from me as something deadly and unclean—but the warrant! Surely the Gov-

ernment would not take such serious steps unless it felt that it had conclusive evidence."

"Warrant? What warrant? For Heaven's sake, Marie, what are you talking about? How can any action of the Government affect you or Harold?"

"But it's for his arrest!"

"Arrest? On what charge? If this is true, then surely it is the work of some idiot. Of what is Harold accused?"

"Conspiracy against the Government!"

If Marie Meredith expected that the startling revelation would serve to check the rising tide of Rose Grattan's indignation, she had not taken into account the natural belligerency of the Irish blood which flowed in the girl's blue veins. Perhaps she was not wholly astonished. At least she gave no indication of any such emotion. Instead she drew her slim little figure as haughtily erect as Miss Meredith herself could have done in her most scornful mood, and declared confidently:

"Conspiracy, nonsense! I suppose some meddler has heard that Harold has been making some speeches before the Hibernian Club in Buffalo and has created a Fenian bogie out of the matter." She snapped her small fingers contemptuously. "That, for their charges and their warrant! Don't you think Harold knows what he's doing? Don't you think he's smart enough to keep within the law?"

She stood there like a small Ajax, defying the lightning of government, ready to face the

entire world in defence of that idolized brother, and Marie Meredith's face grew stern with self-condemnation at her own weakness and momentary doubt.

Suddenly Rose Grattan's mood changed. She dropped her defiant manner, her eyes took on once more their tender, loving expression, and coming to Marie's side, she resumed her seat upon the chair-arm, passed her arm about the other's shoulder and said, very contritely :

"I want to beg your pardon for my nasty exhibition of temper. Will you forgive me, dear ?"

"I need forgiveness more than you," Marie replied, drawing the petite form closely to her. "Your mood has been a tonic for me. I should not have allowed myself to give way as I did, but they all were so positive and Harold's letters were so indefinite, that I couldn't help—oh, the shame of it—thinking perhaps he had been influenced by his associates, in Buffalo and had been indiscreet. It was my very love for Harold which made me weak, I think."

"Sure, it was, you dear goose ; but you know you haven't told me who they are nor what they say. Now make me your confessor and tell me the whole story."

She dropped down on a hassock at Marie Meredith's feet, and with her head resting in that now perfectly composed young woman's lap, looking up into the big, blue, truthful eyes, listened to substantially the same story which

Harold Grattan had heard in rising wrath from the lips of Billy Wood.

And when the story had been completed, not without the addition of the substance of that letter of which Billy had been the faithful bearer, and Rose had pondered the matter for so long a time in silence that Marie had begun to fear that her little friend was perhaps sullenly angry, that wise little philosopher had first pleadingly and then positively commented :

"Oh, you could not have meant it when you wrote those cruel words ! You were excited, nervous ; you would not wreck his life and yours even if he should have espoused the cause of poor, suffering Ireland—even if he had become a member of the Fenian Brotherhood ?"

"Yes, I would, Rose !" Marie's tone was determined, her expression firm and unyielding. "It would break my heart ; but if he cannot disprove these charges, I shall never see him again!"

"There, you are doubting again," said Rose Grattan reproachfully.

"I'm trying not to."

"You mustn't ! Think, Marie, only think what that would mean to Harold—to all of us ! Can't you trust him ? Can't you believe him when he says he has and will do nothing that you can condemn when you know the truth ? It is his nature to take the side of the weak and defenceless. I can readily imagine him sympathizing with those Irish patriots like Emmet and others who have pleaded and labored and died in the

vain hope that Erin's wrongs might be righted, the lash of the landlord master be laid on more sparingly : But I cannot—no, I will never believe that he could be induced to overstep the boundaries of the law, through any mistaken idea of duty. I know that Harold hopes to see the day when Ireland may have equal representation in parliament with other sections of the kingdom, but I am positive he would not consent to become a party to an invasion, which could prove only a deathblow to Ireland's hopes. He might enlist in a revolution, but could not be a party to a common raid. But, Marie, Harold is true to himself ; true to his government ! He wouldn't lie to save himself from a term in prison ; do you think he would tell you that which is untrue ? Never ! I think I can see it all clearly. They have sought to poison your mind ! It is all the work of that detestable Lieut. Upton !"

"Lieut. Upton is a thorough gentleman," said Marie. "He could not stoop to simple slander. What object could he have ?"

"What object ? As if you couldn't guess. innocence ! It's all a plan to cause trouble between you and Harold. Even in school Clifford was always underhand and treacherous. Oh, I know what Lieut. Upton's object is, the conscienceless little cad ! I hate him !"

Whatever more might have been said was prevented by the entrance of Mr. Grattan, who greeted Marie Meredith warmly, enquired after Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, and finally carried the

young woman, who had always been a great favorite with the old gentleman, away to look at his flowers and vegetable garden.

Then, when they returned, Rose had prepared a tempting little lunch to which Marie was forced to do ample justice, though she had protested that she had no appetite, and so with the droll remarks of Patrick Grattan and the discussion of town gossip and enquiries for mutual friends the minutes passed rapidly, and ten o'clock had come before either realized the flight of time.

"We won't think about anything disagreeable again to-night," Rose had admonished, when her father had said good-night and the two girls had gone up to the airy, neatly furnished chamber they were to occupy together.

Up to this time Rose Grattan had not mentioned the subject of her meeting with Major Meredith. Not that she had failed to remember the relationship really existing between that officer and her girlhood friend, for several times she had found herself on the point of exposing the secret. Probably the thoughtless young Englishman would never know what a task he had imposed upon his chance traveling companion in gaining her promise not to betray the relationship. Possibly she would have had more hesitation in assuming the burden, had she known how soon she was to be put to the test.

Standing before the glass of her dressing bureau, taking down the masses of her black hair, the stalwart form and strong, honest face of the

young man again came to her mind, and half turning toward Marie, who had night-robed and was curled up in a big rocker, she exclaimed :

"Oh, I had nearly forgotten to tell you of a new acquaintance I have made, and a very romantic affair it was too. I've found my knight, Marie, but his only armor was the cold reserve of an English army officer."

"I have never noticed that the average army officer was superlatively reserved," was Marie Meredith's somewhat sceptical comment.

"They're not all like this one—he's a royal gentleman and a noble defender and protector of beauty in distress," Rose replied somewhat ambiguously. "I should like you to see him for yourself. I know you'd like him, I do."

"And how long have you known this paragon?" asked Marie Meredith with easy indifference.

"Only a day."

"He must have broken through his cold reserve quite readily?"

"Yes, rather, though I did begin to think he was never going to thaw, but would allow that scrupulous conductor to put me off the train. He came to, however, in time to save me from the brink."

"You ridiculous girl, what are you talking about?"

"About Major Meredith of the —th, and how he came to my aid when I had lost my railway ticket and without money enough to buy a

night's lodging in Fort Erie. Hurrah, for the gallant major !"

She swung the hair-brush vigorously in the air above her head.

"You accepted aid from a stranger?" Marie interrogated in shocked surprise. "How could you do that?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I just couldn't help it." The mischievous girl swung the heavy masses of her hair to one side with a deft movement, and cocking her head bird-like, regarded her friend with mock gravity. "He looked so honest, so strong and masterful that I had to relent, though I had refused at first. The name, too, had something to do with my decision. I felt that I could trust a Meredith." This last archly and with a little catch of the breath, fearing that perhaps she was treading on dangerous ground.

But Marie Meredith evidently attached no significance to the similarity of names, if she thought of the matter at all.

"Which does not necessarily follow," she said carelessly. "I presume the feeling of admiration was mutual?"

"I'm afraid not," Rose Grattan replied, more seriously. "In fact, I am inclined to think that quite the reverse was the case. You know, figuratively, I'm always tipping over my saucer of milk. Undoubtedly, if Major Meredith has thought at all of the little girl his generosity led him into becoming banker for, it has been with

regret that he did not allow that punctilious old conductor to bundle her off the train in the dark at forlorn Fort Erie, for in that case she might have become lost and the influence of another Fenian sympathizer removed."

"How absurd you are, Rose."

"Well, I always stand up for my principles ; but in this case there was only one side of the question I could take with any opportunity for an argument. You wouldn't expect a Queen's officer to commend the idea of an Irish republic, would you ? Certainly not Major Meredith, for he's as rabidly royalist as your own wise self. And I want you to meet him, though I fear I should be displaying a lack of loyalty to Harold were I instrumental in bringing you two together. One glimpse of you, dear Marie, would knock all his reserve and dignity into a cocked hat."

She threw down the brush and running to the back of Marie's chair and flinging her arms about the white-robed figure, kissed her. There was great love between these two, so dissimilar in appearance and temperament. And neither distance, or difference of opinion, or aught else could dim or diminish that purest affection.

"I fear I shall be deprived of the privilege of the conquest you offer," Marie returned sleepily. "There will be no opportunity if I return home to-morrow, and besides, I could not for a moment think of poaching on your preserves."

"No ? Well, we shall see. I'd like to wager

you a pair of gloves that you'll endorse every word of praise I've given him when you see him, and that before the summer is over you'll say that—well, perhaps, next to Harold—he's the dearest fellow in the world."

"Silly!" Miss Meredith sprang up somewhat irritably. "I believe you're in love with this handsome stranger already. I think I shall find it my duty to speak to your father of the matter. I'm sleepy, let's go to bed."

"But I want you to stay over to-morrow. Orders have gone out for the Queen's Own to rendezvous and it will be lively about the barracks now. Do you really intend to remain down there in the country if the troops are ordered out?"

"Certainly, why not?"

"Aren't you the least bit afraid of the Fenians?"

Marie Meredith laughed in her old, musical way.

"I never saw you so really humorous, Rose, as to-night. Uncle says there is not the slightest danger."

"Will you stay to-morrow?"

"Would you return with us?"

"I might, if father thinks he can spare me. Yes, I will."

"Then, if uncle can be induced to remain, we will stop over."

"Oh, I'll attend to that. I'm so glad, for now you'll surely have an opportunity to see Major Meredith."

CHAPTER XI.

A STARTLING DISCLOSURE.

Toward evening of the day following that on which Marie Meredith had so suddenly appeared in Rose Grattan's little parlor, two men came from the officers' quarters at the barracks in Toronto, walking across the parade ground in the direction of York street.

One, of fine, commanding figure and the erect bearing of those who have made the army their mistress, was clad in the regulation uniform of one of Her Majesty's regiments ; the other, slight in stature and less military in bearing, wore the dark green and gold of the famous volunteer regiment, the "Queen's Own." As we discover them, Major Douglas Meredith, is speaking, and there is something like irritation in his usually quiet tones :

"I can't imagine regular English soldiers as deserters, especially to the enemy, and such an enemy as we may expect to find these Buffalo hoodlums, if they should dare to cross the Niagara. Lieut. Upton, it seems an absurd proposition to me."

"But the members of the —th are nearly all direct from Ireland. Gen. Napier, it appears, has heard that members of the command have been rather free with their expressions of sympathy with the proclaimed purpose of the inva-

sion, and he fears, I think, that blood will be found to be thicker than water, once the Hibernians are asked to turn their guns on their countrymen."

"Guns? Bah! Let them take toy rifles and then nobody will be hurt. There will be little need of real coercion, I fancy." Major Meredith had evidently brought with him to America the usual amount of contempt felt by the average Briton for the common people of the United States, and would be forced, as so many older and possibly wiser heads than his have been, to admit that Old England was foolish indeed to too lightly value the activity, determination and power of accomplishment of her western child.

"You may be right, major; in fact, I myself have no apprehension of a serious clash," returned Lieut. Upton, in a somewhat less certain tone. "Really, I believe that Gen. Napier himself is confident that the scare will amount to no more than that, and that is the cause of his planning to send but a few beside the volunteer troops into the field. He undoubtedly figures on making the occasion one for a little genuine field service for the boys."

"And in so doing will find, if this ridiculous invasion should by any chance prove more than a phantom, that he has adopted the most favorable course toward encouraging the invaders. One regiment of trained regulars would be worth all the volunteers that could be collected between Welland and Toronto!"

Upton scowled. He was not pleased with the regular army officer's estimate of the citizen soldiery, of which he was himself a member.

"I think you will change your mind, major, when once you have inspected the 46th," he said, with conscious pride. "The men are well drilled and I am sure will give a good account of themselves, if they are allowed an opportunity."

"They are no doubt all right on dress parade," was the major's rejoinder with native stubbornness, "but I should have little confidence in these college boys and dry goods clerks under fire. You undoubtedly remember the consequences of throwing a great mass of undisciplined tradesmen and farmers into the field at Bull Run. The North found, at heavy cost, that they could hope to accomplish little against the military South, until they had made trained soldiers of their men."

"I know that the terrible slaughter at the first real battle of the civil war in the States was attributed to the frightened and demoralized condition of the raw troops of the North," was Lieut. Upton's reply, "but from my study of the history of that engagement I am confident that unskilled and incompetent officers had far more to do with the disastrous result. The volunteers of the Dominion are well officered, major."

Meredith smiled, somewhat satirically. In his brief acquaintance with the young volunteer officer, which had begun on the previous evening at mess, where Upton had been a guest, and

had been quite assiduously cultivated since, for reasons best known to the major, he had, with his keen perception, very fairly gauged that gentleman's mental and moral character. He had detected the element of egotism in the last sentence.

"I suppose the men are eager for a forward movement?" he said enquiringly.

"Indeed they are," Upton answered, and the lighting of his countenance showed that he was enthused with martial ardor. "They only hope that they will not be disappointed by those fellows across the river."

"What commands will probably be employed?"

"So far as I have knowledge," said Upton, evidently eager to give this stranger all the information possible, "there will be, beside the 46th, Lieut.-Col. Dennis; the Caledonia Rifles, Capt. Jackson; the Welland Battery, Capt. King; the York Rifles, Capt. Davis, and the 13th Battalion under Lieut.-Col. Booker. All these commands are already under arms and prepared to march at a moment's notice."

"Who will have general direction of the campaign?"

"Col. Peacock, of the 16th Regiment."

"A capable officer, I have heard," was Major Meredith's comment.

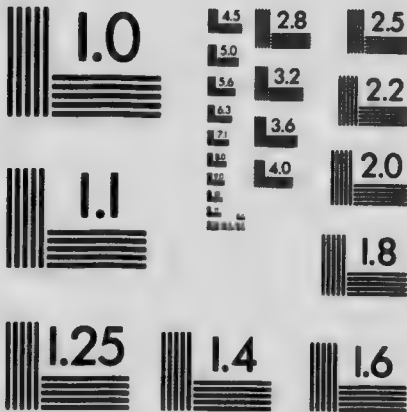
"One of the best," was Upton's enthusiastic reply.

"I think if this Fenian scare proves a matter



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of consequence," said Major Meredith, when they had moved along in silence for some distance, "that I shall get permission to accompany your expedition. I had hoped that my own regiment would be selected for the purpose."

"I'm sure that Col. Dennis and the other officers of the 46th will be highly pleased to have you accompany us, major," Lieut. Upton replied with evident cordiality. "I know I shall, for it will give you an opportunity, perhaps, to observe what the citizen soldiery can do when put to the test. You spoke, I thought, somewhat slightly of the volunteers as most regular army men are inclined to do ; but I assure you the Queen's Own has already seen considerable active service, though it cannot really be said to have been under fire."

"What service?" asked Major Meredith, evidently interested in the young officer's loyalty to the command to which he belonged.

"The first field service, sir, was in December, 1864, at the time a body of irresponsible individuals who were in sympathy with the South in the war in the States, and who had sought immunity from army service at home by coming to Canada, made a reckless raid on St. Albans, Vt. The United States Government entered a protest with ours, and Gen. Napier, as you no doubt have read, ordered a force of three battalions to the frontier at once, to prevent others from this side participating in any similar invasion. It spoke well, you must admit,

for the men behind the counters and the students of the University who within three days had filled the quota required of the Queen's Own, two companies."

"Yes," said the major doubtfully. "What did they do?"

"Obeyed orders cheerfully, not knowing how serious the service might prove, and were rewarded by being sent into barracks at Niagara, where they remained in dreary idleness for four long, monotonous months."

"Restive, I suppose?"

"Quite naturally, yet the officers will all bear me out in the statement that there were practically no infractions of discipline during the time and that when the men were returned to their homes in April, they had been well schooled in a soldier's first duty, obedience."

"Well?"

"After that," continued Upton, "there was nothing beyond a review and rifle matches up to last November, when this Fenian invasion rumor first began to assume what was thought to be a serious aspect. Our government had detectives constantly at work in the States, and it was known positively that large sums of money had been donated by sympathizers with the so-called Irish Republic cause, and that thousands of men former soldiers in one or the other of the civil war armies had offered their services to Gen. Sweeney, the originator of the Canadian invasion idea."

"Who is this man, Sweeney?"

"He was formerly a brigadier-general in the Union army, and is spoken of as a shrewd and capable officer. As the men whom he is likely to have under his command were veterans of a four years' war, you must admit, major, that our people have had some reason for apprehension."

"No doubt. That was the principal reason for my doubt of the efficiency of the volunteers."

"But it didn't frighten the members of the 46th," returned Upton with conscious pride in the men who he well knew lacked not bravery. "Reports of a contemplated attack from various points concerted, and the known fact that at least two thousand members of the Fenian Brotherhood were scattered through the Dominion, caused a suspicion that there might be danger of incendiarism and the government buildings be burned. There had been several fires of mysterious character, which were, whether correctly or not I am not prepared to say, attributed to Fenian influence. So a guard for the drill shed and other property was detailed and has practically been maintained ever since. About the middle of November it was decided to send a force to the frontier to guard against possible surprise. One company was demanded from the 46th, and the same evening a parade of the battalion was ordered and volunteers called for. There had been so many false alarms that the employers of the men forming the regiment, to a great extent threatened to dismiss those from their employ

who answered the government call, but that did not deter them. On that same evening the quota was filled, the men taking the chance of losing their positions, cheerfully, rather than to appear neglectful of their sworn service to the country."

"Which was very commendable," commented the major, with some show of enthusiasm.

"On November 27th the company went to Sarnia and remained on constant guard duty there until January 30th of the present year, with the same excellent record for obedience and discipline as at Niagara. At that time reports from the government detectives became more serious in tone, and the entire battalion was ordered to prepare for service at a moment's notice. Parades were held three times a week up to the evening of March 7th, when the battalion was ordered to prepare at once. At eight o'clock next morning the battalion paraded in the drill shed, nearly five hundred strong. Do you not consider that pretty prompt action, major?"

"Most assuredly," Major Meredith replied heartily. "I have never, understand me, never questioned the patriotism or activity of the volunteers. My only doubt is that they will possess the staying qualities required under fire."

"You will see! You will see, major!" was Upton's confident assertion. "From that time to this the men have been in that state of uncertainty which is far more wearing upon the nerves and is a better test of their mettle than actual warfare would be. Last evening, as you very well

know, orders to parade the battalion were received, and to-night Major Gillmor will have four hundred men at least under arms, to say nothing of the Barrie and Whitby companies."

"You are all certainly to be commended," said the major with genuine approval, "and I shall indeed watch the men's showing in action should it come to that, with much interest, giving them full measure of credit. If I have been wrong in my impressions you will find me as ready to admit the entire justice of your claims. You have a pretty city here," he continued, abruptly changing the subject.

"We think so," was the prompt reply. "I like it better than Montreal or Quebec, though the fact that I have always lived here may have prejudiced me somewhat against the others."

"But I judge that it is not so attractive in a business way as Buffalo. You appear to have a fine water-front, and I have been somewhat surprised that there are so few boats in the harbor."

"Canada is not a great producer yet," said Lieut. Upton, looking down the hill to the broad bay where the dingy sails of a half-dozen lake schooners and the smoke-stacks of two or three small steamers marked the location of the shipping. "Buffalo with her canal and railroads giving short connection with the seaboard, is the present natural outlet for the commerce of the Great Lakes. We lack private enterprise and private capital here, sir, to develop our wonderful natural resources. Just wait until Canada's

great North-west is opened to settlement and improvement, with a canal cut through from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario, and this will become the real great water route to Europe."

"You are optimistic," said Meredith with a pleased smile.

"If you live fifty years," Upton returned confidently, "you will see my predictions verified. By George ! Major, we were discussing the Fenians a few minutes ago. There goes one of the most ardent sympathizers with their cause in the Dominion. But you have met her I think ? Did she air her seditious opinions for your benefit coming up on the train ?"

During the conversation recorded the two men had walked down York street to King, across to Yonge and back on that main thoroughfare to Queen street. Then they had turned west again toward the barracks and parade ground, and upon the edge of this they were now standing, Major Meredith brought to a full stop by Lieut. Upton's ejaculation.

He was pointing with the light cane he carried to two women, one petite, clad in black and wearing a broad hat with a drooping plume ; the other tall, almost stately, beside her more diminutive companion, clad in white, the clinging folds revealing the graceful outlines of a figure for a sculptor's model.

The women had come from the officers' quarters, and were crossing the parade ground near the further side from that where the two men

were now standing, Major Meredith at least metaphorically cursing his luck that he had gone for the walk at all, thereby missing the opportunity to meet Rose Grattan again, an opportunity he had been hoping for ever since she had disappeared from his view two nights before, while he stood stupidly staring after her, dazed by the knowledge of her identity.

He had at that time allowed the opportunity to ask her permission to call to escape him, and had since been uncertain just what course was best to pursue to obtain a meeting. Of course his only object in seeing Rose Grattan again was to learn more of the sister who was as yet the veriest stranger, but for whose sisterly affection he craved far more than ever since that remarkable ride from Buffalo.

For two days, now, he had been puzzling his brain with the question what was best. Should he write a note, asking for permission to call? Or should he go directly to the house, making his desire to converse of Marie the excuse for his action? Major Meredith was strange to the customs of this remarkably unconventional country. He wanted to do nothing to offend the charming little Irish girl who had told him so much that he wished to know. Was it simply for the reason that she was a friend of Marie that he was so thoughtful of her feelings? We surely cannot state with any degree of positiveness, for Major Meredith, as the time passed and he found no ready solution to the calling problem, finally

discovered himself asking the same question and receiving no satisfactory answer.

"Ah, the young lady in black," Meredith returned finally. "Oh, yes, I met her in Buffalo, and had the good fortune to occupy the seat with her coming up. I believe she did advance some rather peculiar ideas regarding matters which are just now of common interest. I enjoyed her conversation very much. Know her?" he asked glibly.

"Ever since she was a baby," was Upton's reply. "She's a good girl enough, but flighty. You know what I mean if you rode from Buffalo with her. There, she's waving at us!"

While they had been speaking the two women had crossed the parade ground, and had paused on reaching the board walk running alongside, to watch the evolutions of a platoon of volunteers who were being put through the manual of arms by a drill sergeant. Evidently Rose had discovered and recognized Meredith and Upton, for she had drawn her handkerchief and was waving it in their direction. Then suddenly, as though fearing that the signal might be mistaken as an invitation to approach, Miss Grattan had restored the cambric to some inexplicable hiding place about her person, and had turned hurriedly with her companion and was rapidly moving away..

Major Meredith had raised his hat with somewhat exaggerated politeness, and Upton had

taken off his shako and waved it about his head with boyish freedom.

"I guess they won't want us any nearer," Lieut. Upton said somewhat disconsolately, as the evident purpose of the young women was made plain. "I'm deucedly sorry, major, for I wanted you to meet that queenly woman with Miss Grattan. I was just going to propose that we go over to them."

"Queenly is the proper term," Major Meredith answered readily, surprised at the similarity of thought. "Who is she?"

"Miss Marie Meredith, of Welland County. By Jove! Same name as yourself? Couldn't be a relative, could she? Whv. Major, what's the matter?"

Major Meredith's face had gone suddenly white as the knowledge that the sister he had been so longing to see was really so near and then the blood had come madly chasing back, dyeing cheeks and temples a vivid red. He simulated a weakness he did not feel, and reeling back, sank down upon a grass-covered bank.

"Must have been too much exercise after a hearty dinner," he said by way of explanation as Upton regarded him with real sympathy in his rather handsome face. "I'm all right now. What did you say was the name of the young woman?"

"Meredith, Marie Meredith, the most accomplished, handsomest and brainest woman in the Dominion?"

"You are extravagant in your praise," ob-

served Meredith, regarding the young officer with an enquiring look. Upton's face reddened and his eyes fell before the other's scrutiny.

"She is a Toronto girl, major," he said rather weakly, "and as I told you, I am prejudiced. What would you say to a call on the Grattans this evening?"

Major Meredith started up eagerly.

"I should be very pleased," he replied. But would it be just the thing? I have not been invited."

"Nonsense!" was Upton's quick retort. "Everybody is always welcome at the Grattans'. Patrick Grattan is one of the best old fellows you ever saw, and Rose is jolly company. Miss Meredith must be stopping with them, for she always does when she's here. I give you fair warning though, that it will do you no good to aspire to more than simple acquaintance with that golden-haired goddess. She belongs to me!"

Major Meredith started suddenly, and again turned his searching gaze upon the inquisitive young subaltern. He was not pleased with the freedom of expression, the lack of respect betrayed by the other's tone.

"But," he began slowly, fixing Lieut. Upton's shifting eyes with his own commanding glance, "Miss Grattan had occasion to refer to Miss Meredith the other evening, and if I am not mistaken she gave me to understand that the young

lady was already engaged. Is she not to be married to Miss Grattan's brother?"

Lieut. Upton dropped down upon the grass near Meredith and for a moment did not reply. His eyes were bent upon the ground, and with a rather vicious movement he jabbed the end of his cane into the soft turf. When he looked up there was an angry flush on his boyish face.

"I don't know as that is an impassable barrier," he said moodily. "She is engaged to Grattan, sure enough, but it's hell, major, to think that a woman like Marie Meredith should throw herself away on a pettifogging lawyer like him! I had the privilege of a visit at Miss Meredith's home the day you came and I imagine I succeeded in putting a few nails in his coffin. In fact, she practically gave me her word that she would break her engagement."

Meredith was becoming deeply interested.

"You must have some strong hold upon her," he observed, anxious to still further draw Upton out.

"I have," was the young lieutenant's reply, a significant smile playing about his beardless lips. "So strong a hold that the charming Marie will throw him over readily enough when I play my last card and her Fenian lover is proven a traitor to the government. What do you think of that, major?"

He drew an envelope from the inside pocket of his coat, took out a folded sheet of paper and passed it to Meredith, regarding the latter with

an expression of triumph as the latter unfolded and read the document. It was as follows :

New York, May 1, 1866.

Mr. Harold Grattan,
Buffalo, N. Y.,

My Dear Grattan :—

I am quite willing to afford you all the assistance in my power in the matter to which you refer in your letter of the 28th ult. I have every confidence in your loyalty to Ireland's cause and feel sure that I can trust you implicitly. There can be no serious delay now to the consummation of our hopes. Recruits to our cause are coming forward rapidly, and when we strike, the blow will shake the English throne to its foundation. The men are assembling at Port Huron, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Ogdensburg and St. Albans. I would advise you to go first to St. Albans. That, I believe, will be the most likely to afford you the opportunity you seek. Find Barrett there and confide in him as you have in me. He's thoroughly posted and will aid you so far as he can. Later, if necessary, you can go to Cleveland. I wish you every success, and can only suggest that you do not allow your enthusiasm to injure the glorious cause. You understand. Believe me, your friend,

T. W. SWEENEY.

"What do you think of that ?" Upton asked eagerly, as Major Meredith refolded the letter and returned it, a look of perplexity shadowing his

usually placid countenance. "Isn't that pretty conclusive evidence of Grattan's complicity with the invasion project? The writer of that letter is the so-called commander-in-chief of the mythical Army of the Irish Republic. This is only a copy; the original is in the hands of the proper authorities in Ottawa."

"It certainly has a very suspicious tone," said Major Meredith slowly. "Where did you get it?"

Lieut. Upton laughed lightly, and answered easily enough:

"We have innumerable ways of obtaining information, major. All is fair in love and war, you know, and in this instance the two great impulses of human nature are combined. I only hope that they'll hang him, damn him!"

"You evidently don't like Grattan any too well," Major Meredith commented.

Someway this apparently treasonable letter which to all appearances had been received by one in hearty sympathy with the sentiments expressed, did not appeal to the phlegmatic Englishman as forcefully as Upton had anticipated. Unconsciously Meredith had found himself being drawn into a mental defence of this absent lawyer, who must certainly have been possessed of some good qualities to enable him to gain the love and confidence of such a woman as he was coming to believe his sister to be. He had been permitted but a brief sight of the face of Rose Grattan's com-

panion, but that one fleeting glimpse had been sufficient to impress him greatly, even before he had any suspicion that her identity was of such vital interest to himself. He had met Grattan, had been drawn to him with that inexplicable influence which invariably creates a bond of sympathy between those of strong moral character, and could not help contrasting him with this dapper young gallant, whom from their brief acquaintanceship Meredith had decided was shallow, weak in principle and as garrulous as a talkative woman. Meredith was a quick reader of character, strong in his likes and dislikes, and he felt there was being forced upon him a growing distrust of this flippant admirer of his sister, which was rapidly being changed to actual suspicion.

"No, I don't, and I'm free to admit it," was Upton's reply to Major Meredith's comment. "I've never liked him since he was a boy in school and used to lord it over us youngsters, who thought we had as good a right to Marie Meredith's smiles as he. He was always in her favor, but I think he's about reached the end of his rope in that direction. I flatter myself, major, that with him out of the way I shall have clear sailing, for I fancy there was something more than gratitude in her glorious eyes the other night when I told her that Grattan was a member of the Fenian Brotherhood, and that the government held evidence sufficient to put him behind prison bars for a long period."

"And did you tell her that?" asked Major Meredith, a dangerous light beginning to flame in the blue eyes. "You profess to love her and yet could deliberately wound her, as such an accusation of the man she has apparently trusted implicitly, could not fail to do? Was that the act of a soldier and a gentleman, Lieut. Upton?"

The blue eyes were steely now and Upton's fell before their scorn. He did not care, evidently, to resent the withering sarcasm of the major's words.

"She did resent it at first," he said somewhat blunderingly, "but I know women, and before I left her she was quite willing to pledge her word not to see him again if his disloyalty to the Queen is proven. I promised to humble her proud head and I'll do it! By God, I'll win her yet!"

In his excitement Lieut. Upton had sprung to his feet. His clenched hand was raised and his face was stamped with a base passion which served to disfigure an otherwise pleasing countenance.

Major Meredith had also come to his feet and had drawn his six feet of stalwart humanity to its fullest height, looking down upon his brother officer with a contempt which the latter could not fail to observe. Upton saw and wondered what interest could have been aroused in this, as he supposed, rather dull and undemonstrative Englishman for this Ontario maid. He was not long kept in doubt.

"Lieut. Upton," Major Meredith said slowly and impressively, every word as clear cut and piercing as steel, "I have listened to you as patiently as I could, for I have had a motive in so doing, beyond that of idle curiosity. It may be the custom of the men of this country to parade the name of the woman they profess to love as a common subject of gossip, but I cannot approve the practice. I want to say, sir, that you are a disgrace to the government you profess to have been so eager to serve. I give you fair warning that you must not in future seek in any manner to force your attentions upon Miss Meredith. If you do, you must answer to me !"

Upton, speechless for a moment at the sudden remarkable outburst, drew himself together with an effort and found voice to demand, with some show of spirit :

"And what, sir, gives you the right to criticise my actions or makes you the proper guardian of Miss Meredith's interests ?"

"For the first," was Meredith's prompt response, "the fact that you are no gentleman ; as to the protection of Miss Meredith's name and interests, I have the best of rights, for I am her brother !"

CHAPTER XII.

A GATHERING STORM.

In the city of Buffalo on the evening of May 30th, 1866, there were startling rumors flying about, and everyone who went upon the streets wore a look of suspense and apprehension. In the homes the one topic of conversation was the Fenians. Would the leaders dare make the attempt to cross the Niagara, in face of the Federal authorities? Would the invasion of Canada become a reality, or would the present promised effort of the members of the Army of the Irish Republic result as had so many previous expeditions?

The air was full of strange portents. Squads of marching men had been observed by the citizens, moving in the streets at irregular intervals during the entire afternoon. These men were dressed in citizens' clothes and were apparently unarmed, the only item of their make-up serving to convey the impression of the military being the occasional flash in the afternoon sun of a brass belt buckle bearing on its war worn face either of the cabalistic letters, "U. S. A." or "C. S. A.," and the precision with which they marched. There could be no question that these mysterious marchers had seen army service, though there was no evidence of the presence of officers, beyond the fact that each squad seemed

to be controlled by some fixed purpose, for they were all directing their movements toward a common centre—either to Townsend Hall at Main and Swan streets or to Dudley Hall in Main street, below the Hamburg canal bridge.

Moving about among the crowds that thronged the principal streets waiting in suspense it appeared, but with no actual knowledge of what was really to occur, were shrewd-looking, keen-eyed individuals, seeking to catch the comments of the loiterers, watching the movements of the marchers and now and then slipping away to the telegraph offices, writing brief messages, usually in cypher, and urging haste on the part of the receiving clerks. These, as might readily be supposed, were either United States marshals or Canadian detectives, seeking to keep their respective governments informed of the latest developments in the uncertain, inflammable, disturbed condition of affairs.

Looking out from the roof of the Townsend block in the direction of the water-front, the observer would have noted that the black shape of the warship Michigan had, during the day, dropped further down the river from her former position, and the slanting rays of the declining sun flashed back from the protruding muzzles of her polished guns.

In the ranks of the marching squads could now and then be detected the form of some well-known Buffalonian, but for the most part they were strangers in the city. There was nothing

in the appearance of these men to suggest the idea of a mob or of vagabonds. In the main they were cleanly in appearance, intelligent looking, and in some cases gave evidence of refinement. They were mostly young, not more than thirty years old, though now and then through the thin ranks appeared the face of one with frost-tinged hair, showing that the owner had passed the half-century mark.

Police officers patroled the streets in apparent unconcern of the actions of the strangers, and beyond the admonition now and then for some larger crowd of sight-seers to move on, gave no heed to the unusual proceedings. There was no excuse for police interference for the men were peculiarly orderly, and moved along the streets with evidently fixed purpose, scarcely noticing the sidewalk crowds, grim, silent, determined.

"There'll be no boy's play if those fellows get across the river," remarked a portly man with a broad face, a fringe of whisker under his chin and a massive gold chain extending across his protruding stomach.

"Right ye ar', Alderman," corroborated a little man dressed in the garb of a laborer, removing his short clay pipe from his mouth and pressing down the tobacco with his little finger. "Be gorry th' redcoats 'll run like shape whin th' Swaney min gits afther thim!"

"Do you really think they'll try to cross?" asked a tired looking woman, with a baby in

her arms, but loud enough to reach the pompous alderman's ears.

"Why not, madam? Why not?" enquired the city official, waving his hand majestically. "What do you suppose we contributed the fund for if not to send them across. And they'll go well armed, too, ready for business. Hello, Harris! What is it?"

He stepped a little to one side where he had noticed the black-clad figure of the Secretary of War's confidential clerk beckoning him.

"Secretary O'Dea wants to see you on an important matter," Harris said in a low tone. "There's got to be something done about getting these men across the river to-night."

"I thought everything was arranged," was the alderman's curt rejoinder.

"It was," said Harris, in a petulant tone; "but Donahue's scared of the Michigan and has backed squarely down on his bargain. He's a nice patriot!"

"Patriot be hanged!" was the other's elegant retort. "He's got about as much patriotism as the Widow McCarthy's pig, but did think the money would hold him. What's to be done?"

"We have found that a tug and two canal boats owned by the Kelderhouse Transportation Company can be secured for \$400. They can readily be taken to the foot of Amherst street, which it is believed will be the best point for embarkation. The men can assemble at some point

in Niagara street and march from there to the boats. Fort Porter doesn't put any confidence in the rumors of an advance."

"I'm not at all afraid of Fort Porter," replied Alderman Callahan, with easy confidence. "It's that damned black steamer out there in the river and that patrol boat scouring the banks, that I'm most in fear of. Isn't there any boat we can requisition in which to take the men over?"

"Not a solitary boat. There's plenty of idle craft, but the owners have evidently been put wise and have disconnected all the engines. The canal boats appear the last and only resort."

"Then the canal boats it will be," said Callahan promptly, "but I wish O'Dea wouldn't send for me so much. It's likely to put the authorities wise, and I don't want to lose the chance for holding on to my alderman job if this scheme should fail. It's too big a plum. Just tell the Secretary to go on and do what he thinks is for the best. He's got the money and we'll stand by him. Is there to be a meeting to-night?"

"Yes, at both halls. The men will start from these two points, in small squads as they have been gathering this afternoon. Three hundred men who came in on the Lake Shore from Cleveland to-day are quartered at Mooney's in Ohio street," said Harris, in an elated tone.

"Donahue's men, I suppose?"

"Principally."

"Who's to have command?"

"Capt. John O'Neil, of Nashville."

"Why, he was in the regular army during the war!"

"Yes; enlisted as a private and came out with a colonel's commission, though he was badly wounded late in the war. He's the right stuff."

"Well, you go down and tell O'Dea to go right ahead with his plans. There's Senator Gallagher; I want to speak to him."

Near Scott and Main streets a freckled faced red-haired boy of fifteen, stood, interestedly watching with the crowd the numerous squads of men who came from various directions and quietly concentrated their line of march upon the stairway leading to Dudley Hall. Observations dropped by various bystanders had aroused the lad's interest, and the longer he waited, the more difficult it seemed to tear himself away from the throng of onlookers.

Yes, it was our old friend, Billy Wood, and as the strains of "The Wearing of the Green," which some patriotic cornet player was rendering in an adjacent saloon, fell upon the lad's ears, he was suddenly recalled to a knowledge of the fact that he had been away from Mr. Meredith's for more than forty-eight hours; that probably Mrs. Meredith was frightened half to death at his unexpected and protracted absence, and worse than all, that Firefly was all this time left to the tender mercies of the hostler of the Queen's Hotel at Fort Erie.

He turned with the desperate resolve not to remain a moment longer, but as he stepped down from a small pile of plank upon which he had been standing, to the walk, a roughly dressed young man, strangely similar in feature to Billy, including the red hair, confronted him, and a voice he recognized, demanding :

"Well, runaway, you're back, are ye ? What ye doin' here ?"

"Same's yerself," was Billy's somewhat defiant retort. He had not relished the manner of his brother's greeting.

"Well, if ye always foller my example, ye'll wear di'mins some day," said John Wood, with assumed pomposity. "Wher' ye goin' ?"

"Goin' home."

"Where's that ?"

"Over across the river."

"Fort Erie ?"

"Seven or eight miles back in the country."

"Farmin', eh ? Well, you are a chump ! How'd ye like t' be a soger ?"

Billy Wood's eyes glistened. It had been his fondest hope that when he had reached the proper age he could impress some recruiting sergeant that Uncle Sam was losing the services of a most valuable man if he failed to enroll William Wood.

But as an affirmative answer to his brother's question trembled on his lips, a thought of Marie Meredith came into his mind and he shook his head.

"Can't do it, Johnny," he said with wonderful firmness. "The folks I've been a 'livin' with have been mighty good to me, an' I can't quit 'em like that. Say, Johnnie, are the Fenians goin' to take Canada?"

"Bet yer sweet life they ar'!" was John Wood's reply. "Sure, the're goin' to take her, an' if ye'll hang around here for a while, ye'll have a chance t' see the fellers as is goin' t' do the trick. Come on over t' the meetin' 'n ye'll hear somethin'. I'm goin' across the river t' night, 'n ye can go right over with me."

Still Billy hesitated. Duty and inclination were at variance in the lad's mind. His brother noted his indecision and continued:

"Aw, come on, Bill! Might as well be hung fer an old sheep as a lamb. It's dark anyway an' it don't make any diff what time ye git home now. Come 'long an' see the fun!"

And Billy yielded.

At the entrance of the hall they were stopped by a guard who demanded the password. John Wood gave it readily enough, in a low tone, the mystic word escaping Billy's ear.

"The kid's all right, Hogan," said John Wood, pushing the younger lad before him into a narrow passage connecting with the main hall. "He don't need any password."

"Can't do it," returned the tall sentry, though not very determinedly. "Orders 's orders, ye know, Wood."

"Now, look here, Dan Hogan, ye know me 'n'

know I wouldn't tell ye anythin' but what's dead right. Th' kid ain't old enough t' jine th' Brotherhood, but he's a goin' over with us t' night, an' I want him t' go in 'n' hear the speakin'. It'll be all right."

Hogan made no further protest and Billy soon found himself inside the main room of the building, in which were assembled three or four hundred men, the greater part of the audience being made up of the stern-faced, quiet-mannered strangers who had been assembling during much of the afternoon. Nearly all were seated, and in the body of the hall profound quiet reigned.

On an elevated platform at the rear of the long hall, a table and a half-dozen chairs were placed. As Billy Wood and his brother entered and walked down towards the platform, where a few vacant seats remained, a man in dark clothes came from the wings of the small stage carrying a pitcher of water which he placed with a glass on the table.

Scarcely had he disappeared when there was a slight commotion near the door and five men entered and walked down the hall, mounting the narrow steps to the platform. As they reached the stage and turned toward the assemblage, a low but enthusiastic cheer rang out, quickly checked as one of the five, a man of soldierly bearing and pleasing face, advanced to the front of the platform and impressively raised his hand. The others took the chairs which had been provided for them. The tall man stood for a full

minute, regarding the upturned, expectant faces before him, conscious pride in his keen eyes, a satisfied expression about his somewhat florid but far from repelling countenance.

"Men, Sons of Irish Liberty," he said, in a tone low but penetrating to the furthest corner of the long room, "you have answered the call and I read in your determined faces the stern purpose of patriots ! The hour has come ; the train is laid ; the fuse is ready ; the match lighted, we shall not now withhold our hand. Before to-morrow's sun is set I believe a telling blow for Irish independence will have been struck. I see before me faces that I saw at Bull Run, at Fairfax Courthouse, at Petersburg and in the Wilderness. You were all brave soldiers then ; now you are to fight in a more noble and glorious cause, the throwing off of the chains of monarchical slavery from the steel-chafed limbs of Erin !"

"Who is that ?" Billy asked, as the speaker paused to take a swallow from the glass.

"That's Gen. John O'Neil, of Tennessee. He's goin' t' be in comman'."

"Men," continued Col. O'Neil, "the long waiting, which has been so hard for you to bear, is nearly past. Before the sun rises again the green ensign of Ireland will be planted on British soil, and the hated red flag of England will be trailed in the dust ! Men, we are going into the enemy's country. After to-night the time for talking will be gone by. So, now I want to cau-

tion you that not all on the other side of the Niagara are our enemies. We have many friends there, who, when they know that we are in earnest will receive us with open arms. Members of our Brotherhood have been grievously misrepresented. They have called us would-be plunderers, robbers and marauders; let us show them that we have only one purpose in the course we shall pursue—the redressing of Ireland's wrongs and the establishment of a free republic, where the oppressed of our native land can enjoy the fruits of their labors and go to their beds at night with no fear of summary eviction hanging over their heads like the sword of Damocles. There must be no violence to any except those who meet us with arms in their hands. The rights of inoffensive citizens must be regarded, and remember, above all things, that we make not war on women! To-night the mothers, wives, sisters and sweet-hearts of all true Irishmen are praying for our success and our safety. Let no man commit any act which would bring the blush of shame to the fair cheeks of one of Ireland's daughters!

"In another hall in this city to-night double the number of brave men here assembled are waiting the signal. There are veterans of the greatest war of modern times, from Kentucky, from Tennessee, from Louisiana, from Ohio, and from the great Empire State. I have talked to them as I have to you and they will not fail. As well I know that you will not. Our commander-in-chief has entrusted the direction of this cam-

paign to me, but I can accomplish nothing without your loyalty and devotion to the one cause. There must be no plundering of dwellings, no unnecessary destruction of property, nothing to degrade the dignity of our holy cause. Horses and food may be requisitioned, but careful account must be kept of all such reprisals, and when the war is over and the first congress of the Irish Republic convenes at Ottawa, appropriation will be had to reimburse the Canadian people.

"Your officers have had full instructions. You will remain quietly here until the time for action arrives, then remember the cause and your oath. I promise you that before midnight the order, forward, will be given. Don't forget the watchword, 'For Ireland and Liberty'!"

During the time that Col. O'Neil had been speaking, candles had been lighted in the hall and heavy curtains dropped over the windows. At frequent intervals there had been symptoms of applause, guarded in its expression, for it was well known that every move of the conspirators was being watched by the detectives and government officers. It was really surprising that the unusual precautions taken on this particular evening failed to arouse the suspicions of those sleuths and result in an appeal to the Federal commander at Fort Porter, in which case the memorable invasion of Canadian territory on that foggy morning of May 31st, 1866, would have been nipped in the bud and the bloodshed which followed, prevented.

"Gee ! but he's a great speiler !" was Billy Wood's comment, who, after listening to brief remarks from two other men who had accompanied Col. O'Neil to the hall, had become suddenly conscious of the fact that he had had no supper and had induced his brother to go with him to a neighboring restaurant, where they were speedily regaling themselves upon a generous dish of pork and beans. "Mv, but he did look fine standin' up ther' and tellin' them men what what. But, say, Johnnie, how they goin' to fight without any guns ?"

John Wood looked across the table at the lad with a peculiarly knowing smile.

"Don't you worry 'bout th' guns, sonny. They've got 'em all right, all right, 'n' plenty ov ammynishun too. Jist ye wait 'n see !"

At 11 o'clock the dispersing of the assemblages at both Dudley and Townsend halls began. The men departed from the two Fenian headquarters in groups of four or five, going in different directions, and although the detectives and deputy marshals were still on duty, they believed that the attendants at the two meetings were simply returning to their homes or boarding places, consoling themselves with the thought that another night was to pass without the threatened invasion becoming a reality.

At Main street and the Terrace a man in black clothes, one of a party of five, nodded pleasantly to a short, stout young man whom they had met, and stepping to one side, beckoned him. The young fellow came forward eagerly.

"Can you keep a secret for two hours, King?" asked the man in black, in a low tone.

"Ever know me to fail?" was the response. "What's in the wind now, Harris?"

"If you'll be at the foot of Amherst street at one o'clock," was Harris' reply, "you'll get the scoop I promised you for The Record."

"What?" cried the surprised reporter. "Do you really mean to say you're going over? Tonight?"

"Enough said," was Harris' laconic reply, and he hastened on to join his former companions.

"Well, I'll be dinged!" ejaculated the newspaper scribe, gazing thoughtfully after the disappearing form of his friend. "Even the detectives are not on. King, you're slated for a trip to the Canadian side as war correspondent!"

Walking with his brother and several other men, Billy Wood finally came to a large vacant lot in Niagara street, not far from Prospect Park. Here there was found a large company which was constantly being augmented by the arrival of other small parties similar to their own, and soon fully seven hundred silent, determined, purposeful men had assembled in the vacant space. Billy could hear low-toned commands and his quick eye soon discovered that those arrived were being formed into companies, the members of the crowd rapidly taking their places in the ranks with the precision of long practice. It was a novel and interesting experience for the lad.

and he stood watching the strange and significant proceedings, in open-mouthed astonishment, until aroused from his absorption by a familiar voice and a hand upon his shoulder.

"What are you doing here, Billy? I thought you were going to carry my message to Miss Meredith? Haven't turned Fenian, have you?"

Billy was so startled by the sudden appearance of Harold Grattan that the power of speech was temporarily removed. He opened his mouth, but no words came. Suddenly there rushed upon him a full consciousness of his shortcomings, and he hung his head, for once at a complete loss what to do.

Grattan was quick to read the lad's thoughts and promptly came to the rescue.

"Never mind, Billy," he said kindly, "you're only a little late, that's all, and I don't blame you, considering the company you've run into. But I'm mighty glad you didn't get away, for I want you to do me a favor. Have you got the key to the boat you came over in and can you direct me so I can find it? I've got to be on the other side to-night, and I can't go with this party."

Billy brightened visibly.

"The boat's at the foot of Porter avenue," he said, "and you c'n tell it 'cause it's red with a white stripe. The oars is in under a pile of lumber, right near the edge of the river, cluss by the boat. Do ye think Miss Meredith will overlook it?" he asked anxiously.

"She'll have to," was Grattan's cheering assurance. "Give me the key, I'm in a hurry. I'll look you up in the morning, sure."

Billy handed over the key and Grattan seized his hand in an earnest clasp.

"Billy, you're a trump!" he said. "But don't you get mixed up in any trouble on the other side. Better get Firefly and light out for Mr. Meredith's as soon as you get across."

A moment later Grattan had disappeared in the dark shadows of the adjacent trees and Billy Wood was marching down Niagara street, an integral part of a well-organized regiment of the Army of the Irish Republic.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARIE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Major Douglas Meredith stood in his somewhat meagrely furnished room in the officers' quarters at Stanley Barracks, reading a telegram which had just been brought to him by a messenger, who waited to learn whether a reply was to be returned to the office.

There was a perplexed look upon the Englishman's face as he perused the three lines of the dispatch. A frown disturbed the usual placidity of the high, white forehead, and there was an unwonted nervousness in his movements as he returned the yellow paper to its envelope and began pacing the narrow confines of his quarters.

"It don't seem possible that Grattan could be right," he mused, speaking aloud his thoughts. "He must be mistaken, or he is trying to deceive me. No, I can't believe that—I won't believe it—I'll trust him to the end!"

"What, sir?"

The increasing vehemence of Meredith's words had served to arouse the messenger, who had been intently watching the operations on the drill-ground, and now turned from the window.

"You here yet?" cried the major, whirling upon the startled boy in quick resentment of the interruption of his thoughts. "I thought you'd gone long ago. No, there's no answer," he con-

tinued in a milder tone, "no answer except this. Now, get out of here !"

He tossed the messenger a shilling, closed the door after the lad's rapidly retreating form, and turned to his desk ; but instantly, as though impressed with a new idea, sprang back to the door, swung it open, and called after the boy :

"Here, sir, come back here ! Do you want to earn another shilling ?"

The lad was back like a flash and watched the tall soldier in some astonishment as he opened his desk, seated himself before it, and taking from a pigeon-hole a bundle of telegraph blanks, wrote rapidly :

Headquarters H. M. —th Regiment,
Toronto, Ont., May 30th, 1866.
To Major-Gen. Napier,
Commander-in-Chief H. M. Forces,
Quebec.

Major Douglas Meredith asks permission, in event of his own command not being assigned to immediate duty on the frontier, to be allowed to accompany the 46th or some other command, on any speedy movement to the front which may be made.

MEREDITH.

He blotted and folded the sheet, handing it, together with a dollar, to the now surprised messenger, with the injunction :

"Now, my lad, see how quickly you can get that off on the wire, and there's another dollar waiting for you if you bring me an answer here within an hour."

When he was again alone, Major Meredith took out the original message and read it through once more, this time aloud :

To Major Douglas Meredith,
Stanlev Barracks, Toronto.

Cleveland, O., May 30.—Has again eluded me. Will probably join invading party crossing at Fort Erie. Am following at once.

GRATTAN.

"To join the Fenian invaders?" soliloquized the evidently perturbed officer. "Was there ever such an absurd proposition. And yet, one can never tell. Almost anything is possible with one in his probable condition. If Grattan should be proven right in his surmise, and can also satisfactorily explain his own position, I shall feel that I owe him an abject apology."

For several minutes Major Meredith sat abstractedly, his eyes fixed upon the telegram, his hands clasped behind his head, his mind in a confused whirl of uncertainty, his soul stirred by the most divergent of thoughts. Suddenly there recurred to him that incident of the drill ground, where he had allowed his wrath to obtain the mastery of his better judgment, though strong self-restraint had prevented him doing the young volunteer officer, Lieut. Clifford Upton, a personal injury.

After so bitterly denouncing the man he had at first hoped to regard with friendship, he had walked rapidly away to the quarters, without

waiting for the lieutenant to recover from the stupor of surprise into which Meredith's sudden remarkable revelation had plunged him. There had been no intention on the part of the Englishman to reveal his relationship to the young woman of the golden hair, sight of whom had indirectly led to Upton's boastful recital. He had intended to accept the young officer's invitation to call upon Rose Grattan, for he was yearning for the meeting with Marie and was rapidly reaching a condition of mind where it would be impossible for him to resist the inclination to break down all barriers, go to her, declare himself and claim a brother's rights.

Pondering these things there again came a strange, to him unexplainable desire to gaze into the big black eyes of Rose Grattan again; to listen to the music of her voice; to watch the witching play of the blushes upon her fair cheek.

And with thoughts of the coquettish, impulsive, disloyal, but altogether charming Irish girl, came the quieting lotion for Major Meredith's sadly disturbed mind, for temporarily blotting out every other scene there came before him the parting wave of the dainty hand at the Toronto station, a bold challenge, he now reasoned, to follow and continue an acquaintance so well begun. Suddenly he sprang up, drew out his watch and studied its face.

"It's now six fifteen," he muttered, reflectively. "If I receive an answer from the general to-night, it will doubtless arrive before eight

o'clock. That messenger will let no grass grow under his feet in delivering it. I'll have time to shave and dress and, by George! I'll do it—I'll see the little Fenian this very night!"

With Douglas Meredith to resolve was to act. He dived into his wardrobe and brought out the very best that a somewhat modest taste had provided. Never had Major Douglas Meredith exercised such scrupulous care in personal arrangement as on this occasion. Never before had his wardrobe appeared so meagre or so inferior in quality. It had been easy enough to dispose of the preliminaries, but when it came to the selection of the proper articles of apparel, that was a far different matter. The white ruffled shirt was of fine linen. That had been one of Meredith's extravagances and would pass muster. Even the dark suit cut by one of the best tailors in the Strand, and fitting the graceful, stalwart figure to perfection, would do very well. But the tie, that was the most serious problem of all. When the entire stock had been gone over and cast one side as unsuitable, he finally selected a plain white silk bow, groaning in spirit as he tied it about the Piccadilly collar.

"I suppose she'll think I'm a terrible guy," he soliloquized resentfully, when the adornment had been completed, surveying himself in the glass with all the critical eagerness of a young debutante, and with utter disfavor. Of course he meant Marie!

Major Meredith could have led a storming

party over a shrapnel-swept plain with a smile on his blond face and a feeling of exultation in his heart, but as he contemplated the task he had now set himself, the cold sweat started upon his forehead and he was half resolved to abandon the project entirely.

That the major was in a state of high excitement was revealed by the frequency with which he consulted his watch and the eager glances cast through the window in the direction whence the expected telegraph messenger must come, if at all.

All things come to him who waits, no matter how impatiently, and so to Major Douglas Meredith in due time came the laggard telegram. He seized it from the perspiring messenger's hand as if it had been the proverbial straw, and tore it open to read, forgetting in his eagerness the expectant bearer, until reminded in a wavering, pleading voice :

"Did you forgit the dollar, mister?"

"Did I promise you a dollar?" he asked uncertainly.

"Sure, you did, mister."

"Well, come to think of it, so I did, so I did. Obligated to you for the reminder. Here it is, now double quick out of this."

The elated messenger needed not the last command, for he was upon the drill ground before Meredith had ceased speaking. The officer took the telegram from the envelope and read with supreme satisfaction :

Adjutant-General's Office.
Quebec, May 30, 1866.

Major Douglas Meredith,
Toronto, Ontario.

I am directed by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief to inform you that you are ordered to accompany the 46th Regiment at once to the Niagara frontier, for purposes of observation of the movements which may take place there. Instructions to this effect have been forwarded to Lieut.-Col. Gilmor.

DeSalaberry.

"Well, that's settled at any rate," was Major Meredith's satisfied comment as he placed the telegram in his pocket. "But what does the general mean by saying 'at once'? Can it be that a movement of the troops has already been ordered? Never mind, my boy, you have another solemn duty which must first be performed; but hanged if I hadn't rather face every Fenian south of the Niagara than that one saucy, little rebel! Hello, lieutenant, what's up?"

An officer of his regiment had come across the parade, walking in haste toward his own quarters. At Meredith's hail he halted, turned and saluted. As he did so his superior noted that his face was flushed with excitement or exertion.

"Forty-sixth just received orders to march. Lieut.-Col. Gilmor has been instructed to proceed to Port Colborne with 400 men early to-morrow morning."

"Is there any definite news from the frontier?" asked Meredith earnestly.

"Nothing definite," was the lieutenant's reply, "but it is understood that the Fenians contemplate an immediate attack on that point, the objective being the destruction of the canal locks, in the hope of preventing the passage of boats between Erie and Ontario."

"Are no other troops to be sent?"

"Not at present, so far as I have been able to learn," replied the lieutenant, with ill-concealed vexation. "I don't see the sense in sending a lot of those clerks and college boys away from their work when there are plenty of regulars who are tired of idleness and spoiling for a fight!"

"To my mind," said Meredith soothingly, "the action of the Commander-in-Chief is of itself pretty good evidence that he believes the present rumor of invasion is as baseless as those which have preceded it. General Napier is too old a head to send boys where actual work is to be done."

"You may be right, major," was the slow answer, "but it's my opinion there'll be bloodshed this time, and the fault will rest upon those who are willing to trust too much to the militia."

Major Meredith did not reply. Suddenly to his mind had come the significant words of Grat-tan's despatch: "Will probably join invading party crossing at Fort Erie!"

Which was right ? The suggestion of the man whose actions, to say the least, were of a character to cause suspicion, or the information doubtless sent to the military headquarters at Quebec by the detectives, who had been on constant duty ever since the first wild rumors of invasion had first come to be considered with any degree of seriousness by the Government ?

"I think I'll go over to the drill-shed and see what Col. Gilmor has to say about it," he finally said, and bidding the lieutenant good-night, started off with a long swinging stride in the direction of King street, but before he had reached that popular thoroughfare it became plainly apparent that the people of the city were in a more than usual state of mild excitement.

At various points crowds of considerable proportions were congregated. On either side of the streets through which he passed there were hurrying throngs, all heading in one direction as though attraction was found in one certain locality. The nearer his approach to the drill-shed, the denser became the throngs, and the whole tone of the chance conversation which came to his ears was the prospective invasion.

War's alarm had indeed awakened the city. Wild and improbable rumors were in every mouth, growing in the telling, until the more nervous portion of the community was in a state of uneasiness bordering upon actual terror.

This was especially the case with the mothers, wives and sweethearts of the men who

had received notice to report under heavy marching orders, for the information which had come to them only a few days before from what was supposed to be authentic sources, that the volunteers were to return to their usual avocations, had been received with delight by many thousands. Now these hopes were not only ruthlessly crushed, but their anxieties were fed by the startling rumors which had obtained ready credence, that a long and probably bloody war was about to be inaugurated in their very midst.

Major Meredith found his way into the drill shed, which was nearly filled with the green and gold uniformed members of the "Queen's Own," and the numerous friends who were drawn to the place of rendezvous, with irresistible inclination. Indeed it was with difficulty that the guard stationed at the approaches to the drill floor was able to keep the crowding, eager friends of the soldiers within the prescribed limits.

Upon the drill floor itself there was little less confusion. Stacked guns, piles of blankets and haversacks, with other impedimenta of hurried preparations for the march, were scattered everywhere, while among the confused jumble of soldier equipment the men strolled aimlessly, but with set faces and conscious bearing, for they knew too well that the thoughts and best wishes of all Toronto was centered upon themselves that night. There was little conversation among the men. Evidently their minds were weighted with far too serious thoughts to admit of the usual

gay badinage, the witty quip and ready repartee. There was no faltering, however, but a nervous, determined energy appeared to control their movements.

Suddenly the buglers marched to the centre of the hall and blew the assembly. In an incredibly brief time, with an alacrity which surprised but pleased Major Meredith, who was looking on with thorough interest, the amateur soldiers had formed in companies, dressed their lines and come to attention; the first sergeants had reported the formation to the captains, saluted and marched proudly to their stations, and four hundred men, five minutes before a mixed mass of humanity, had become a fixed, motionless, perfect regiment of well-disciplined troops.

Drawn up on three sides of a square facing inward, the men waited. Then there came from the officers' rooms marching abreast with soldierly precision, two men, the one dressed in the full uniform of a lieutenant-colonel of the Queen's Own, the other in the rich scarlet of the Acting Quartermaster General of Her Majesty's forces in Canada.

At the centre of the open side of the square the two halted, and as each drew his sword to salute, the muskets of the regiment sprang as one piece to the "present arms." Then the Queen's regular officer stepped a pace to the front and addressed the statue-like soldiers briefly:

"Soldiers of the Dominion," he said in a clear, resonant voice which sounded strangely

loud and distinct in the silence which instantly fell over the assembly room, "I am greatly pleased to be able to be here to-night and to commend you for the wonderful promptness with which you have responded to the call of duty. England has indeed no cause to fear that this fair domain will fall into vandal hands when she has such loyal and capable men ready at a moment's warning to spring from their daily avocations to attend her call. It will be my pleasure and my pride to convey to Her Majesty on my return to England a full knowledge of the efficiency you have shown and the faithful service you have performed. If indeed it shall be found that the mistaken enemies of the mother country are really so mad as to attempt to obtain a foothold on this side the boundary, then remember that you are under arms not alone in defence of your Queen and her rights, but also for the protection of your mothers, wives and sweethearts, and the altars of home."

A cheer which shook the building went up as the two officers wheeled and with the same soldierly dignity as had marked their movements on entering, returned to the commanding officer's room.

"Who was the speaker?" a woman's voice asked, and hearing no answer Major Meredith replied :

"That was Col. Wolselev, Acting Quartermaster General of the regular troops in Canada."

Then, turning to learn who was the questioner

whose voice had seemed familiar, he was somewhat surprised and greatly pleased to find himself face to face with Rose Grattan, and that stately young woman of the golden hair whom Lieut. Upton had unconsciously told him was his sister.

The color mounted to the edges of his yellow hair as he lifted his hat and bowed profoundly at Miss Grattan's merry ejaculation :

"Why, Major Meredith, have you really condescended to recognize us ? We've been watching you for the past fifteen minutes hoping that you might turn, but you've had eyes for nothing except that stupid drill floor. Let me introduce my friend, Miss Meredith. Miss Meredith, Major Meredith, the valiant knight who rescued me from that ogre of a conductor."

Marie Meredith laughed in her easy way and held out her hand with cordial familiarity.

"Miss Grattan has been particularly lavish in her praise of your promptness in coming to her aid, and I have become greatly interested. I am very pleased to meet you, Major Meredith."

Caught so completely off his guard it is not to be wondered that the hand Major Meredith extended somewhat reluctantly and yet eagerly to grasp that of the woman he had traveled thousands of miles to see, shook perceptibly, causing Miss Meredith to give him a quick, enquiring glance, and a faint smile to play about her lips. Surely this was a strange specimen of manly diffidence who could blush so furiously and shake

like an aspen leaf at contact with the hand of a woman !

But to Rose Grattan, possessing a better knowledge of true conditions and not quite so well informed as Marie Meredith regarding the displayed nervousness, it appeared that the soldier carried himself wonderfully well in the trying ordeal, and she inwardly commended him for his self-control.

But now that the cool-blooded Englishman had taken the plunge the shock soon passed, and in a moment Major Douglas Meredith was himself, steady, well controlled and confident. He felt that he was a leading character in this little drama into which he had been cast and he was fully determined to banish stage fright and act well his part.

"The pleasure is indeed all mine," he said with gallant courteousness. "Miss Grattan, I imagine, has a weakness for praising people, for she had placed yourself upon such a high pedestal that I had no hope of coming so close to the shrine. Are you stopping long in Toronto, Miss Meredith?"

"I return home in the morning," she said.

"And I'm going with her," was Miss Grattan's interjection.

"Then you do not attach much importance to the latest rumors of trouble on the frontier?" he asked.

"I have no fear that any action of the Fenians will result in serious consequences to us."

was Marie Meredith's quiet reply. "I have every confidence in the ability of the military of the Dominion to protect our interests thoroughly. I am quite sure that the United States government would not allow any large number of its subjects to invade a country that is on terms of friendship with it, as we are. If there is an invasion, Major Meredith, it will be promptly checked."

Douglas Meredith felt a strange elation at the sincerity and positiveness of her words and tone. Here indeed was a true Meredith and a genuine English woman. He realized that he should be very proud of this handsome, imperious, loyal sister of his, and he was half tempted to reveal to her his own real identity. Then he mentally cogitated :

"No, not yet. I must if I can discover first the real state of her mind concerning Harold Grattan. When this little war scare is over I will go to her and tell her the truth. For the present let her believe that there is no closer relation existing between us than that of a passing acquaintanceship."

Which only went to show that Major Douglas Meredith possessed a goodly share of that for which we must all confess a natural weakness, a love for the mysterious.

"And how is it with you, Miss Grattan?" he asked, turning with a humorous twinkle in his blue eyes to that young lady. "Has there been any change in your opinions regarding the bold followers of Gen. Sweeney?"

"None whatever, major," she returned promptly, her own dark orbs a-sparkle with mirth or enthusiasm. "We'll show your vaunted soldiery what fighting men can do. But, really, as I cannot induce Miss Meredith to remain here in Toronto out of harm's way, for the present at least, I feel it my imperative duty to accompany her home, where I may possibly be able to act in the capacity of bodyguard to her highness, tario."

should the tide of invasion submerge Lower On-

She made an impressive courtesy in the direction of her friend.

"You return by train, I suppose," he said enquiringly, again turning to his sister.

"Yes, we are going down to Fort Erie on the early morning express. We had intended to return yesterday," Marie continued, glancing at Rose archly, "but by staying over we could secure this valuable hostage, so deemed it advisable to submit to her will. Does your regiment go to the frontier, major?"

"Unfortunately not at present," returned Meredith resentfully. "I have, however, received permission to accompany the 46th to Port Colborne. I don't suppose there will be any such good fortune as our having the same train."

"Oh, the troops will not leave Toronto by train at all," said Rose Grattan quickly. "How unfortunate. I understand they will embark on the steamer City of Toronto, going to Port Dalhousie, and from there over the Port Colborne

road. We should have been delighted had you been able to accompany us, Major Meredith."

Some way Rose Grattan felt that she owed this good-looking and apparently frank soldier some concession, and she was impelled to offer this fragment of friendly regard. There was evident sincerity in her words, and Meredith reddened with pleasure.

"I am indeed the only loser," he said gallantly, "but I hope the fortunes of war take me in your neighborhood."

"If they should, you must surely call on us," said Marie genially. "Uncle and aunt would be pleased indeed to meet you, especially as you are so recently from England. We have relatives in Edinburgh. Were you ever in that city?"

Major Meredith hesitated before replying. He glanced at Rose Grattan suspiciously, and she, noting the look, and guessing his thoughts, shook her head almost imperceptibly, yet with sufficient force to allay his partial mistrust.

"I have been there," he returned, "though I have not visited the Scottish city in a long time. I came here directly from Woolrich."

Rose Grattan regarded him earnestly.

"When may we hope to see you at Mr. Meredith's Welland county home?" she asked, and the eager perceptions of the officer led him to believe there was real interest in her tone.

"Certainly within a very few days," was his prompt reply. "I trust this rumor may prove to have no serious foundation, in which case I shall

come to Fort Erie at once. Will you remain there long, Miss Grattan?"

There was an ill-disguised eagerness in his tone which was not lost upon the two women and which gave to Rose Grattan's foolish little heart a genuine thrill of pleasure, though of course she would have contended, if pinned down for an explanation, that it was on Marie's account.

Just then Patrick Grattan and James Meredith came up. Mr. Grattan recognized the major instantly and shook his hand warmly. He had a warm place in his heart for the stranger who had been kind to his daughter. Mr. Meredith was presented.

As the hands of uncle and nephew met, the latter gazed with much of interest into the face of his relative, and was struck with the remarkable resemblance he saw there to the man who had been like a father to himself, his uncle Donald. The family profile and expression were wonderfully marked. Mr. Meredith also seemed impressed with the similarity of name and regarded his young kinsman with an intentness which for a moment nearly unnerved the young man. Rose Grattan came to his rescue very promptly, yet in a way which was not pleasing to his mind.

"Shall we go home now, father?" the small diplomat asked suddenly. "I'm tired of standing here, aren't you, Marie?"

At the gate of the Grattan cottage Major Meredith left them, although asked by both Rose and her father to enter. Inclination was strong

upon him, but he had not yet reported to Major Gilmor, and he had as yet no knowledge of the exact time fixed for the departure of the battalion. So he excused himself, promising to visit them at the Meredith home within a few days at most and went back to the drill shed with a strange commotion of conflicting thoughts disturbing his usually placid mind.

"Well, what do you think of my knight?" Rose Grattan queried as the two girls were disrobing for the night, in Rose's dainty room.

"Do you want my real opinion?" asked Miss Meredith, quite seriously.

"Sure!" was Rose's sententious reply. "Is he not fine looking? Don't you think him a most agreeable gentleman?"

"You know, Rose, I never did like red hair," was Miss Meredith's quiet answer, "but for a" that he's not bad looking. He's strangely different for a soldier and a man who has traveled as he has. He acted like a bashful boy when you introduced him."

"That was probably because he was smitten at first sight," said Rose, playfully.

Miss Meredith went on unheeding.

"Major Meredith certainly has the manners of a gentleman, and I think he's honest. But Rose, I made one discovery which did not please me."

"What was that?" she asked in surprise.

"That the romance begun on the train is not yet ended; in fact, my dear, that you are in love with him already!"

CHAPTER XIV.

HELD UP BY FENIANS.

There was a long, sharp blast of the locomotive whistle, a quick, unpleasant jolting of the passenger coaches, the brakeman busily engaged in polishing his lantern at the rear of the car dropped globe and waste to rush to the platform, the brake was twisted tight, and then, with a succession of short jolts which nearly threw the passengers from their seats, the Toronto express came to a full stop.

"What is it?" asked Marie Meredith of Rose Grattan, anxiously, that impetuous young woman, who sat next the window, having very promptly pushed up the glass and was now leaning half out of the car trying to learn what had caused the sudden call for down brakes.

"I think there must be something on the track," Rose replied, seeking to reach still further out, for the train was standing upon a straight stretch of track, and it was next to impossible to see what was the apparent obstruction. "Yes, there is. Why, it looks like a lot of railroad ties piled up as high as the locomotive headlight. Perhaps there's a wreck or something of that sort ahead, and some thoughtful person has done this to save the train and all our lives. There isn't any sign of a station anywhere, but there's a lot of people up there by the engine.

They're all men and they've all got long sticks in their hands. No, they haven't either ; it's guns ! I can see the flash of the bayonets in the sun. Why, look up there, Marie ! See the little tents near the top of the hill by the woods. Look !"

"Possibly the 'Queen's Own' did not go to Port Colborne," said Marie with composure. "Perhaps they took a special train and came here instead."

"They departed by boat as intended," said James Meredith from the seat behind them. "These are none of the Toronto soldiers, but they may possibly have come from Hamilton."

He was studying the men congregated about the forward part of the train and others who could be seen in the wagon road only a few rods up the hill.

"Why, those are not soldiers !" he suddenly exclaimed. "They look more like tramps."

"But they've got guns," said Rose, "and see, that tall man is giving orders and the men are forming in files like the regular troops. Listen !"

"Attention ! Right dress ! Front !"

The hundred or more passengers craning their necks from the car windows caught the soldierly commands, spoken in sharp, crisp tones by the apparent leader of the party, who was rather neatly dressed and wore a shiny high hat ; saw the military precision with which they were executed and then turned to one another with wondering enquiry.

"Order arms !"

Fully one hundred musket butts came down to the hard ground beside the track with a thud. The apparent officer turned and came down to where the surprised and somewhat frightened passengers were watching proceedings with strange and fascinated interest. As the man came near they saw that he was not more than thirty years of age, of kindly countenance and graceful, athletic movement. He stopped midway of the train and addressed the wondering passengers.

"I sincerely trust the sudden stoppage of the train has caused you no uneasiness or alarm, good people," he said in a pleasantly assuring tone. "We had reason to suspect that it carried soldiers instead of peaceful citizens. The delay will be only temporary. As soon as my men can remove the obstruction, you will be able to proceed. No harm is intended anyone, I assure you."

He raised his silk hat with polite grace, bowed profoundly, and wheeling with military precision, marched back to the gun-bearing squad. Immediately a detail was set at removing the ties and five minutes later the locomotive gave two short toots, the bell clanged and the train began to move.

"What a strange proceeding," said Marie. "What can it mean?"

"Do you mean to say you can't guess?" asked Rose Grattan, "when nobody has been talking of anything but invasion for the past three days? Do you see that flag?"

The train was moving very slowly, as if the engineer had lost confidence. Following the direction indicated by Rose's pointing hand, rising above the little tents at the top of the short hill, Marie Meredith observed the object indicated—observed and turned to her uncle with an appealing look.

"Can it be possible they have already crossed?" she asked with forced composure.

"Possible and probable," returned Rose readily. "That is the Irish flag and nobody but a Fenian would raise that in Ontario to-day."

"It certainly looks like a raid," said Mr. Meredith with some excitement. "Have you noticed the telegraph wires? They all appear to be broken down!"

This indeed was the case. When at four o'clock that morning Col. O'Neil—or Gen. O'Neil, as he was termed in the records of the Army of the Irish Republic—had landed at Lanigan's dock a mile below Fort Erie village and had found none to oppose his movements, he had at once detailed and sent out under a sergeant, a sufficient number of men to cut all telegraphic communication between the little hamlet and the Canadian forces which he very well knew were on the alert to obtain instant information of his movements and the Fenians he had been selected to command. Taking advantage of the Canadian government's doubts of the sincerity of the Fenian purpose to enter the Dominion, he hoped to make a forced march across the peninsula, accomplish-

ing the purposes of the move on Port Colborne, which he had prevented from making by lake by the presence in the harbor at Buffalo of the war-ship Michigan.

It had been with the further purpose of misleading the Canadians as to his real objective, that after the Fenian commander had obtained breakfast for his men from the inhabitants of Fort Erie and a day's rations in addition, which the citizens, in their utter state of indeffence, could not refuse, he had headed his troops down the river in the direction of Frenchman's Creek. Fearing that by some chance the news of the night's invasion had been conveyed to Toronto, and that the morning train from that city might be converted into a troop train, he had sent a detail to select a favorable position on the railroad and there had piled the ties upon the track at a point where the engineer could look far enough ahead to avoid collision, and then had quietly and confidently waited developments.

As soon as Col. Hoy, who was in command of this advance guard, had assured himself that none but ordinary travelers were on the train he had promptly, as we have seen, sought to relieve any anxiety they may have felt and send them on their way without harm and as expeditiously as possible.

As the train proceeded, the two young women studied from the coach window the faces of the members, of the detachment of the Fenian army scattered in small groups along the track

for some distance. As they were passing the very last of these squads Marie Meredith suddenly sprang up, seizing her uncle's arm and pointing to a slender, red-haired, freckled-faced boy, a heavy musket over his shoulder, who was idly watching the now rapidly moving train.

"Look there, uncle! There is a sample of the veterans of the Civil War these valiant Fenians have brought to conquer Canada! It doesn't seem possible, oh, it cannot be true that he would be enticed into this awful wickedness!"

Mr. Meredith had looked from the window as he was directed and what he saw caused him to fall back in his seat with almost an imprecation.

"No wonder you are surprised," he said. "I would have trusted him completely. Who could have led him into this?"

But Billy Wood's temporary peace of mind was not disturbed by a knowledge of the emotions the discovery of his presence in such company had aroused in the minds of his friends, and it was perhaps as well that he did not know.

"What is it?" asked Rose, surprised at the strange excitement of Marie and Mr. Meredith.

"It's treachery of the basest sort," was Meredith's reply. "That boy, for whom we have done so much, has been led into this absurd affair by some one who should have been his friend. This comes of your sending him to Buffalo, Marie."

"But I don't understand," said Rose Grat-tan.

"Didn't you recognize the boy?" asked Marie. "It was Billy Wood.

"Oh, was it? Then you may be sure that there is some good reason for his being with these men," said Rose confidently. "He would never think of doing that which he had reason to believe would displease you. Don't condemn him until you know."

"But he had a gun; he must be one of them," James Meredith protested. "The little vagabond, I'd like to flog him as he deserves."

"First catch your rabbit!" cried Miss Grattan gaily. It was astonishing how little uneasiness the sudden knowledge that the long rumored invasion had really become a fact, gave the irrepressible girl. "I'd stake my life on Billy's integrity. He might be in sympathy with the Fenians; it would be strange indeed if he were not—but he would not go against Marie's wishes. Even Harold, if he so desired, which I know he would not, could not shake Billy's loyalty. You'll find in the end that I am right."

Mr. Meredith looked as though he attached little importance to Rose Grattan's earnest defence of the lad, but Marie was more easily impressed. She gave Rose a grateful glance and said:

"You may be right, Rose; my heart tells me that your impressions must be correct. I cannot believe that Billy has ever done a thing knowingly which he thought I would disapprove, since the night he came to us begging for a night's

shelter from the storm. No, I won't believe he is with those awful men by his own wish. There is some mystery about the affair."

"Well, here we are," cried Rose gaily, beginning to gather up the wraps and bundles. "The Fenians appear to have left the town standing."

Indeed Fort Erie on that day, which had marked the crossing of Col. O'Neil's little army and the seizure of the town in the name of the Irish Republic, appeared little different from its usual condition of lethargic inactivity, when the Meredith party stepped down from the car platform and started up the main street of the little village.

Here and there at long intervals men in citizens' clothes, but carrying muskets, patrolled the street, but no apparent effort was made by these members of the guard to in any way molest or interfere with the movements of the natives. In fact, they frequently stopped in their beats to converse with the villagers familiarly, the guns alone furnishing evidence that there was anything saving of belligerency in their presence.

At the corner near the Queen's Hotel they found the hired man waiting with a team and democrat wagon.

"I didn't dare to leave the horses," he said apologetically, as Meredith and the two women came up. "The Fenians are taking every horse they can get their hands on. It's a sad day, Mr. Meredith, when the thieves can come across from the States with not a soul to interfere, and carry

off our property without so much as by your leave."

"They'll rue the day," returned James Meredith firmly. "Our troops have been slow to act, but they'll be here soon and then the ruffians will quickly be locked up. How are things at home?" he continued with some show of anxiety.

"All right, so far, only the boy Billy is gone and Firefly is missing. Mrs. Meredith is greatly worried. She thinks something has happened to the lad, but I reckon he's been afraid to come over from Buffalo on account of the Fenians. I don't think the lad 'ld do anything wrong."

No one took the trouble to enlighten him concerning Billy's whereabouts.

"Poor aunt, how she must have suffered in mind," said Marie Meredith, anxiously.

"We must hasten home to relieve her anxiety as soon as possible," said Mr. Meredith.

"Hello, Lewis, what is it?"

Postmaster George Lewis of Fort Erie had come hurriedly down the street towards them, beckoning with his hand to the driver to halt.

"I judge you are intending to drive home," he said, coming up. "You'll have to get a pass from the Fenian commander, or you'll be held up before you get out of town. There's a guard stationed on every road leading into the country."

"This is a nice condition of affairs," cried

Meredith angrily. "Where is this commander of the tramp army?"

"He's down at the Lewis House, waiting for a detachment of his men who were sent to destroy the Port Colborne road bridge to return. I think you'll have no trouble getting the necessary permit. I have met Col. O'Neil and have found him a very pleasant gentleman."

Meredith shook his head.

"Pleasant gentleman, indeed," said he, "to lead a crowd of cutthroats and horse thieves into a friendly country, seeking to disguise the real purpose of plunder under the high-sounding title of a stroke for Irish independence. Bah! it makes one sick to think of it."

"So far there has been nothing to indicate that their purposes are other than honest," said Lewis, quietly, "though, of course, we can only believe that they have made a sad mistake."

"They surely showed no disposition to robbery," observed Rose Grattan. "Those men, I mean, who stopped the train. The officer who spoke to the passengers, had the manners of a well-bred person."

"But a man may smile, and smile, and be a villain," said Marie Meredith. "They certainly appeared to me a dangerous and unprincipled lot."

"Even Billy Wood?" asked Rose, maliciously.

"Let's drive to the Lewis House at once, uncle, if we must stoop to ask a favor of the

Fenian leader," urged Marie, unheeding Kose's comment. "We must get home as soon as possible."

"Get in Lewis, if you can spare the time," said Meredith, and the postmaster at once complied with the request.

At the hotel the two men, leaving the two girls in the wagon with the driver, were shown by the landlord to the room which for a brief time Col. O'Neil had chosen as his headquarters. They found the Fenian commander seated by a small table intently studying a rough map of the Ontario peninsula, one of those consigned to the care of the confidential clerk of Secretary of War O'Dea at that meeting in the Constitutional Hotel in Buffalo. A guard was stationed before the open door, who barred their progress as they would have entered.

"We have business with Col. O'Neil," said Lewis. "It will require but a moment."

"We demand to be taken to your vagabond leader at once," supplemented Meredith, an angry flush coming to his broad face at the thought of being dictated to by this nondescript soldier; and he moved as if to force his way into the room where Col. O'Neil, attracted by the conversation, had pushed his maps aside and was regarding his would-be visitors with something like amusement in his keen eyes. Meredith felt a bayonet pressed against his breast and promptly desisted, though there was a dangerous light in his eyes.

"Demand, is a strong word, sir," O'Neil observed, rising and stepping to the door. "I may say it comes with a bad grace from one whom I suspect would see me to ask a favor. Guard, admit the gentlemen. I will hear them."

The soldier promptly saluted, brought his gun to a shoulder arms and moved one side. Meredith and Lewis entered and were handed chairs by the Fenian commander, no trace of irritation in his manner.

Lewis, with a warning glance at Meredith, at once preferred the request for a permit to leave the village.

"This gentleman, Col. O'Neil," he said, "is Mr. James Meredith, who resides on a farm some five miles out of the village. He has been in Toronto and came down this morning. He is very anxious to reach home and desires a pass from you to avoid being stopped by your guards."

"Desires?" asked Col. O'Neil sarcastically, "well that certainly is a better word. May I ask, Mr. Meredith, if this request is preferred in accordance with your wishes?"

"It is," was Meredith's low response, taking warning from the earnest glance which Lewis bent upon him. "My wife is alone except for a young girl and I am very anxious on her account."

"How many are in your party?"

Col. O'Neil asked the question, though from the window he had noted the team drive up and

had marked the occupants of the wagon. He had also correctly judged the object of the visit.

"Four in all," Meredith replied, "my hired man, my niece, a young lady friend and myself."

"And what certainty can I have that you will be content with returning to your home?" the Fenian leader said, fixing Meredith with his gray eyes. "What assurance that you will make no effort to drive further and warn the authorities at Welland of the fact that we have crossed the river. I don't care to take any chances."

"You certainly are not slow to take chances," said Meredith sharply. "When you find a rope around your neck and are pleading for mercy from the government you have insulted, you will realize what chances you have taken."

Col. O'Neil laughed, though there was no mirth in it. Apparently hot words were on his tongue, but he remained outwardly calm and with a seeming effort, said in even tones :

"I can overlook your present irritation, Mr. Meredith, for I realize how displeased you must be at the ease with which we accomplished the first step in the movement for Irish liberty. England has been asleep too long to awake readily. She has laughed at the possibility that her slave would dare to attempt to throw off her shackles. You must blame your own government, not the patriots of Irish blood, Mr. Meredith, if conditions in Fort Erie are different from what you

would have them. You come from Toronto, you say ; have the troops yet left that city ?"

"I did not come here to give information against the government," said Meredith hotly.

"No, I don't suppose you did," admitted Col. O'Neil quietly. "We won't argue that question, but I can tell you that Gen. Napier will require something more than a battalion of volunteers to stop the march of the Army of the Irish Republic. Confident as I am of the success of our cause, I can overlook little unpleasantnesses like your last words, and assure you that you will in time come to change your opinion of the character of the men who have devoted their services to as glorious and righteous a cause as patriots ever espoused."

"But the passes, colonel," said Lewis, fearful that Meredith's reckless exhibition of antipathy might block the purpose of their visit.

"Oh, yes, the passes," said Neil, drawing a pad towards him and taking a pen. "I'm going to issue them, Mr. Meredith, but I give you fair warning that any attempt on your part to carry information to your people at Welland or any other point, will prove a serious mistake, one for the results of which to yourself I shall not be responsible !"

He wrote the necessary words, tossed down the pen, and arising, presented the paper to Meredith with graceful, condescending movement.

"That will take you through the lines," he said, "and assure you a safe drive home, so far

as the members of my command are concerned. I would advise you, however, Mr. Meredith, to put a closer guard over your tongue. Not all the men in this command would be as lenient with you as I have been. If you return quietly to your farm and remain there for the present, you need fear no annoyance from our army. We are not making war on Canadian citizens, but against the principle of monarchical wickedness which has caused poor Ireland to bleed, and has persistently rubbed salt into her wounds. Our warfare shall be directed entirely against the troops, representatives of the Queen; no harm shall come to others while Col. John O'Neil is in command. Good day, gentlemen."

Postmaster Lewis bade them good-bye at the hotel veranda, and Meredith sprang into the wagon, told the driver to reach home as speedily as possible and then relapsed into silence.

Little was said by any of the party during the drive. Not only Mr. Meredith, but the two women were occupied with their own thoughts. Marie, it must be confessed, was in a peculiarly excited state of mind. Here was the long threatened invasion which her uncle, Lieut. Upton and other loyal Canadians had ridiculed and scoffed at, an accomplished fact. Without opposition the Fenian army, ununiformed, but to all appearances not unfamiliar with military discipline, had crossed the boundary line and had the country at their mercy. And Billy Wood; was there some good purpose in the lad's presence with the

invaders? Was—but no, she could not harbor that thought for a moment—and yet it would come back to her. She knew full well Billy's devotion to Harold Grattan; could it be possible that among that reckless band which had crossed the Niagara in defiance of the guns of the United States warships, they levied tribute of food upon the occupants of the little village, and had crowded them with wanton acts by the probable theft of her property, Firefly, could such a thing be that the man she loved, the lover whom she had trusted then half doubted, then trusted only to doubt again, could be one of this graceless rabble?

They passed the guard stationed on the road perhaps half a mile from the village limits readily enough when they had shown the pass promptly demanded, and drove on at a good rate of speed.

Along the road they were traversing there appeared no indications of unusual excitement. Farmers were plowing in their fields, apparently unmindful of the fact that the dreaded Fenian army was in camp only a few miles away; farmers' wives and daughters went about their household duties as blithely as if they had no knowledge of the near presence of an invading host, bent on the overthrow of the government under which their protection had been guaranteed.

But had the occupants of the wagon known that at some distance behind them, ever maintaining an equal distance, reining in when the

team ahead was forced to walk up a small hill, spurring on again when the Meredith horses broke once more into a trot, came a party of three horsemen, they would have doubtless felt less easy in their minds regarding their own safety.

But they did not know, and soon the chimneys and gables of the Meredith home came to their view through the irregular foliage of the trees, the little rise of ground on which the house stood was surmounted, and Mrs. Meredith, standing on the veranda, called to them a welcome home.

After helping Marie and Rose to alight, and the girls had run away up the path to meet and embrace the pleased mistress of the house, Meredith had turned to his man, had spoken rapidly and earnestly, in a low tone. Then, as the man had nodded his head understandingly, and had gathered up his lines promptly and driven away to the barn rapidly, Meredith had taken up the numerous bundles and had gone to greet his wife, a satisfied expression upon his florid face, a grim smile playing about his firm English mouth.

Scarcely had the democrat disappeared in the barn, before three horsemen rode slowly up the little hill below the house, studied the homestead intently as they approached, and exchanging significant nods, passed by, disappearing in a little depression of the road further on, where a dense growth of underbrush flanked the highway on either side.

Fifteen minutes later the Meredith hired man came down the lane from the barn leading a saddled horse. On the animal's sides could be observed the marks of the harness straps so lately removed, showing that the horse was one of those just driven from Fort Erie.

At the horseblock the man mounted, and turning the animal's head in the direction of Welland, touched the horse's side with a short switch he carried and the willing beast sprang forward at a gallop.

He had descended the depression in which the strange horsemen had disappeared, and was speeding along a level stretch of road where the foliage of the trees nearly brushed him as he passed, when suddenly the way was blocked by mounted men, his bridle was grasped by strong hands, his horse forced back upon its haunches, and a gruff voice cried :

"Well, the colonel wa'nt fur wrong, me hearty. Thought ye'd git off nicely an' tell the Wellan' folks th' news, didn't ye ! Tie him up, boys, an' we'll carry him back t' Fort Erie. I reckon this hoss will jist about suit th' colonel. Jist hold yer yawp, young feller, 'r ye'll find th' Fenians 's bad as they've been painted fer ye !"

CHAPTER XV.

HOW BILLY RAN THE GUARD.

Through the fog of an early morning a skiff containing a single occupant shot out from the American side of the Niagara River, and urged forward by a pair of strong and skilful arms, in an incredibly short time touched the Canadian shore, not far from the spot where an hour previously the canal boats carrying the Army of the Irish Republic had discharged their unusual freight.

Stepping out of the boat, the man, who had been searching the shore with earnest gaze, finally started forward along the bank, dragging the light skiff after him by the small chain attached to the bow, towards a tree standing near the water, its great roots bared on one side by the flood which had eaten the earth away.

"There's the place Billy said the boat belonged, I take it," the man soliloquized. "I'll just make it fast and then I'll see what luck I'll have dodging those ambitious constables. I hope Billy has succeeded in getting Firefly out of the barn and away before daylight. If O'Neil's men ever get their eyes on that piece of horseflesh, I doubt if Marie would ever see her pet again."

The nose of the skiff was drawn up to the root of the tree, the chain adjusted, the padlock inserted and locked and then Grattan walked up the grassy bank toward the highway, to be con-

fronted before he had gone a dozen yards in the dim light by an only partially distinguishable shape and the command, in a low and somewhat unsteady voice :

"Halt ! Who comes there ?"

Grattan promptly halted.

"As I live, it's Billy Wood," he muttered under his breath. "I'll see what sort of a soldier he makes. Friend with the countersign," he continued audibly.

"Come ahead with the countersign, Mr. Friend," came the answer, and Grattan laughed, while he advanced, so near that Billy Wood recognized him and nearly dropped his gun at the realization that again he had been found loitering when he should have been on his way to Mr. Meredith's.

"What are you doing here ?" Grattan asked, coming out into the road and regarding the lad with some severity. "I thought I told you to make a bee line for Mr. Meredith's just as soon as you got across ! What are you doing with a gun ? You haven't enlisted, have you ?"

"No-o," was the hesitating answer, "I ain't, but I'd kinder like to, Mr. Grattan. If it wasn't for Miss Meredith, I wouldn't wait a minute. But I'd like it better if they had some uniforms an' horses, an' cannon. I didn't know they could have a war without 'em."

"But if you haven't joined the Fenians, Billy, what are you doing here on guard ? Do you know you gave me an awful scare ?"

"Huh," was Billy's rejoinder, "if I hadn't knowed it was you, I'd a run. I seen ye a tyin' up the boat an' that's the way I knowed ye. My brother is picked out fer guard an' he wanted me to stand fer him while he run up to the village to get some chewin' tobacco. Ther' he comes now an' ye better walk along up the road an' I'll come up soon 's he gits here."

It had been no great surprise to Grattan to find the boy still with the Fenian command on his arrival at Fort Erie. He had studied the youngster well while without Billy's knowledge he had watched him at the Niagara street rendezvous of Col. O'Neil's forces. He had marked the boyish enthusiasm of his face as the men had been formed into squads and companies, and he had realized that faithful as the boy was to the interests of his young mistress, it would require but little persuasion to induce him to join the ranks of the invaders. He now felt that he must get him away from the influence of his brother as soon as possible, for there was no telling what needless danger the boy might be carried into if he were allowed to remain.

Darkness was now fading and Grattan was growing uneasy. He must see Billy again; he could not leave him with the Fenians, and yet he could not imperil his own chances by remaining in or near the village after it became quite light. It would only be putting evidence into the hands of his enemies, should he be found in apparent company with the invaders. He

might tell them that he had rowed across the river alone and that his visit had no connection whatever with the Fenian raid, but no one would believe it.

But still he waited, and presently Billy came running down the road toward him. He seized the lad's hand as he came up and half dragged him toward a small clump of timber standing back from the road a bit.

"Come over here, Billy, I want to tell you something, and then you must go up to the hotel, get Firefly and light out for Mr. Meredith's. Do you realize how Miss Meredith is worrying about you and the horse? Will you promise?"

Billy hesitated, but only for a moment. Thought of Miss Meredith for the time being overcame every other sentiment. All desire to become an Irish patriot was temporarily, at least, removed. He answered with every evidence of sincerity:

"Sure, I will, Mr. Grattan. I reckon I fer-got for a little while, but I won't let it happen ag'in. I'll git the mare an' be at Mr. Meredith's before ye kin git there."

"Well, you'll have to be pretty lively, Billy, if you do, for I shall cut across the fields and can make it in an hour. If you get there ahead of me don't tell them a word of having seen me. I want to surprise them."

"Well, I reckon ye'll have t' postpone th' surprise," said a rough voice, and Dan McGonagle stepped out of the shadows of the trees and laid

his hand upon Grattan's shoulder, at the same time shoving a revolver against his breast.

"Now, don't ye move; don't ye make a motion t' git away 'r I'll drop ye as I would a mad dog, an' Dan McGonagle can shoot some, espec'ly when he's got his gun plum ag'in th' mark. Hold up yer han's!"

"Well, Dan," said Grattan coolly, doing as the constable commanded, "I reckon you have got the drop on me this time, and I suppose I'll have to submit, but let me tell you one thing, you'll find it the sorriest piece of work you ever did. I shall appeal to the American consul!"

"American consul be damned! What's he got t' do with this matter? I'll take a chance on makin' any mistake 'n this," said McGonagle confidently. "There, I guess them 'll hold ye fer a while!"

He had snapped a pair of steel handcuffs upon Grattan's wrists with a dexterity born of long practice, and now stepped back, regarding his capture with a glow of supreme satisfaction upon his big face.

"Didn't think ye was a runnin' right inter th' lion's mouth, did ye?" he chuckled. "Beer a watchin' this road ever since th' hoodlums landed. Rather thought ye'd be with the gang."

Grattan did not condescend to deny the implied charge. His mind was too fully occupied at the moment with too him far weightier matters. It would probably require a day at least in the disturbed condition in which affairs at

Fort Erie were sure to be thrown by the advent of the Fenians, to secure his release through the efforts of the United States consul, Mr. Blake. He would not be able to pay the contemplated brief visit to Marie for the purpose of setting her mind at rest regarding his connection with the invaders ; that fact gave him some regret. But more serious to him, at that particular time, he reasoned, was the circumstance that the man he had followed from Cleveland, whom he had come face to face with the previous evening in Buffalo, but only long enough to establish his identity, would again be carried away from him by the shifting panorama of the Fenian campaign, perhaps escape him altogether. What was to be done ? These ridiculous stories of his disloyalty to the English Government, of his connection with the Fenian Brotherhood, were likely to upset all his plans, though he had no fear that they would bring serious injury to himself. Before the fact came to his attention that a warrant had been issued for his own arrest, he had counted upon Dan McGonagle's assistance to carry out a plan by which he expected to establish the real identity of George Merton, and he believed perform an excellent service for the young English officer, Douglas Meredith. But now it seemed indeed that fortune had entirely deserted him. Without his liberty he could do absolutely nothing. Suddenly an idea came to him.

"What are you going to do with me ?" he

asked the constable, and that worthy promptly replied :

"Reckon I'll have t' lock ye up 'n th' Fort Erie jail till th' friends ye come over with are out ov th' way. 'Tain't a very scrumptious place, fer a high-grade pris'ner like you, but it'll have t' do fer a day 'r two. It's well built, that's one consolation."

"Well, McGonagle, I'm ready to go with you without any trouble for I know very well that you have no grounds on which to hold me and that as soon as the matter is brought to the attention of the proper authorities I'll be released and you will get yours. But I have a favor to ask and I know you are a good enough fellow to grant it."

"Well, what is it?"

"This unexpected invitation to become your temporary guest has seriously interfered with some business matters of importance to an officer of the English army in Canada. It is absolutely necessary that I should send him a message containing the information he desires. I know this boy and believe he is honest and reliable. Give me two minutes to tell him what I wish him to do and I'm ready to go wherever you say."

"That seems fair enough," returned McGonagle, "I know ye ar' a lawver an' might have business as ye say. Fire away, I'll give ye th' time. But say, why don't ye write it? I've got

some paper here, an' I'll take off one ov th' bracelets."

"That's much better. I didn't suppose you 'ld make that concession. Dan, you're a good fellow, if you do make some mistakes. We all do, I suppose, at some period of our lives. I'll remember this when this little affair of the warrant is straightened out."

McGonagle handed Grattan a small sheet of blank paper and a pencil, then he unlocked one of the handcuffs, keeping his revolver ready for instant use as he did so.

"I'm not takin' any chances, ye see," was the constable's comment as he stepped back a pace, still covering his prisoner with the gun. "Now be quick about it, before them damn li'ens take it into their heads t' come up this way. But, remember, no monkevin'!"

Grattan wrote rapidly, folded the paper and handed it to Billy, who had been an interested and uneasy spectator of the scene. He had recognized McGonagle and had expected the officer would remember vindictively the blow he had dealt him in the barroom of the Queen's Hotel. The constable was, however, too much absorbed in the larger game which he had bagged, to pay any attention to the boy.

But when Grattan had handed the lad the written message and had whispered in Billy's ear as the boy came close to receive it: "That's for yourself, read it as soon as you are alone," McGonagle had noted the byplay and his sus-

picious had been suddenly aroused. He sprang forward quickly and reclasped the handcuff on Grattan's wrist, then turned to study the boy, who had nodded knowingly at Grattan's words and had now turned his face down the road instead of towards the village. McGonagle was no fool, though he had done a foolish thing in granting his prisoner the favor asked so readily. He saw now, as he thought, the possible consequences and as Billy started to move away, the officer exclaimed :

"Damned 'f I don't b'lieve yer sendin' t' th' Fenians askin' 'em t' come an' help ye out ov the scrape yer in. Here, boy ! Come back here ! Why, I'll be blowed 'f 't ain't the kid as smashed my hand up in the hotel the other day. Hold on there, boy, or I'll drop ye !"

But Billy Wood gave no heed to the angry command. Instead of turning back or slackening his pace, he swerved quickly into the shadow of the trees and although McGonagle sent a bullet from his revolver after him, the fleeing boy was speedily out of sight, unharmed.

"Well, it don't matter much," commented the baffled officer, self-consolingly. "Once I get you locked up I'll defy the whole Fenian army t' take ye away from me !"

"As I said before, McGonagle," returned Grattan, "you're a mighty good fellow, and I tell you honestly, to relieve any apprehensions you may have, that the message I sent will go into no Fenian hands. In fact, it may please

you to know that they are the last people I should go to for assistance at this time."

While Dan McGonagle's bullet had not come within several yards of fleeing Billy Wood, he had heard the pistol's report and the zip of the lead as it cut the foliage above his head, and the significant admonition had served to accelerate his speed to such a degree that before the constable had returned his revolver to his pocket and started his prisoner up the road in the direction of the village, the lad was well out of range and pausing at the top of a gentle elevation was regarding the officer complacently as the latter, evidently fearing the possibility of an attempt at rescue, was hurrying Grattan forward almost at a run.

"Guess he's got his hands full," soliloquized Billy. "and I'd better see what Mr. Grattan has writ. He seemed sort of anxious about it."

Seating himself on a stone beside the road he unfolded the paper Grattan had given him and although but an indifferent reader, had little trouble in deciphering the lawyer's bold chirography. It was brief but explicit, and when he read it, Billy sat for a full minute gazing abstractedly into the distance. Then he scratched his curly head reflectively, as if seeking to arouse his dormant memory. Suddenly his face brightened and he slapped his leg in a satisfied way.

"By jing! I remember that feller," he exclaimed, "big man, gray hair, full beard, deep sunk eyes, don't have anything t' say t' any-

body, jist mumbling to hisself and cussin' the officers behind their backs because they don't strike right out fer Welland. That's him, that's Merton, sure's ver born. An' Mr. Grattan wants me to keep my eyes onto him till tomorrer, when he thinks he'll be out of the jug. All right. Bill Wood, yer boun' to be a Fenian whether ve want to er not. Jimminy ! won't it be fun !"

When Billy returned to the temporary camp at the dock, the invading army, with the exception of a line of skirmishers numbering possibly fifty men, who under command of Captain Cornelius Donohue had advanced to the village and bivouacked under the trees on the rise of ground in the rear of the little hamlet, had assembled under arms and was about moving on the village, for the purpose of levying tribute of a breakfast upon the citizens.

One of the most astonishing features of this remarkable raid, was the lack of fear or excitement on the part of the residents of Fort Erie. Of course some of the more timid had promptly packed a few valuables when the knowledge came to their ears that the dreaded invaders, long heralded, had finally set foot on the Canadian side, and had crossed the river to Buffalo on the ferry, which was allowed to carry passengers from, but not to the west side of the river.

But far the greater part of the people of Fort Erie remained, with the idea of protecting their property, and found that with the exception of the demand for food and the requisitioning of a

few horses, they had little to fear from the bold invaders.

After the wants of his men in the provision line had been promptly and apparently not grudgingly met by the villagers, Col. O'Neil, after sending, as has been previously stated, a detachment to destroy the railway bridge on the road to Welland and another detachment to intercept the Toronto express, had formed the balance of his command into columns of fours and had sent them, under command of Col. Owen Starr of Nashville and Col. Grace of Cincinnati, to Frenchman's Creek, three miles down the river. There they had been instructed to go into camp, orders which were carried out to the letter.

Col. O'Neil himself, as we have seen, had remained at Fort Erie, receiving reports from his scouts and hopeful of the arrival of heavy reinforcements from the American side. It is a fact not generally known that on that 31st day of May, 1866, there were under arms in the city of Buffalo and seeking to cross to swell the ranks of the invaders, who had slipped over in the foggy morning past the none too vigilant river patrol and the guards at Fort Porter, fully two thousand brave, resolute and war-tried veterans.

But with the first intimation received by the United States authorities that the advance guard of the Army of the Irish Republic was really in the Dominion, laggard Federal activity was aroused. The warship Michigan was sent further down the river to the vicinity where the early

morning passage had been effected; the tugs Farrar and Harrison were pressed into service, each with a cannon aboard and a detachment of marines to make up the crews, patrolling along shore constantly from far below Black Rock to the harbor pier.

More troops had also arrived at Fort Porter, and altogether the chances of additional strength coming to Col. O'Neil's forces became very vague indeed. But the intrepid though ill-advised commander of the Fenian army, through some strange oversight on the part of the managers of the affair in Buffalo, was not made acquainted with the true condition of affairs, and his campaign was conducted on the assumption that his allies from the States would be on hand when they were really needed.

Late in the afternoon, startling news came to the ears of the Fenian commander. A scout who had advanced on horseback to a point beyond that where the telegraph wires had been cut, had obtained the important information that two columns of British troops, one at Port Colborne and the other at Chippewa, were advancing to attack the little army at Frenchman's Creek, very likely before the next morning.

When the hard-riding scout had found Col. O'Neil and imparted the startling news the brave Irishman at once realized that prompt action was required to save his handful of men, and his active brain at once turned to the solution of the problem confronting him. By the time his plan

of procedure was marked out, the detachment sent to the bridge had returned and with them came the three horsemen who had shadowed the Meredith party on their homeward drive. As Col. O'Neil was gathering up his maps and papers, putting them into a small satchel which he slung over his shoulder, the leader of the party, forcing before him the luckless Johnson, Mr. Meredith's hired man, pushed into the room.

"Well, colonel, we nabbed the chap, just as he was lighting out for Welland. We caught him within twenty rods of his boss's house."

Undoubtedly the information that the English were already moving from Welland, was responsible for the reply.

"You have done well, my man," said O'Neil addressing the soldier "your faithful performance of duty shall be remembered. But the men of the Army of the Irish Republic have no cause against the peaceable citizens of Canada." Then turning to Johnson: "You are at liberty to return home, sir."

"They took my horse, too, colonel," said the man pleadingly. "Can't I have that?"

"How about that, sergeant?" asked O'Neil with a covert wink at the soldier. "Is the animal a good one?"

"I think he is, sir, just about the article for your use."

"I need a horse badly at this very moment, my man, and I think I'll be forced to requisition yours. Have the assembly sounded, sergeant, I

shall proceed at once to join the main body down the river."

But if Col. O'Neil had been somewhat perturbed at the information brought by his scout, he was thrown into a far more unpleasant frame of mind to learn on reaching the camp that fully one hundred men had dropped from the ranks during the three-mile march and were probably already safe on the American side of the river. It was a far from encouraging prospect, but the man who had been commended by Major-General George Stoneman of the Union Army as "a brave and worthy officer in whose judgment and capacity I have the greatest confidence," and who had been suggested for a command in the regular United States army by the same corps commander, did not hesitate.

A hurried council of war was held at which were present the principal subordinate officers of the little command, and a forced night march to reach the railroad running from Chippawa, and thus intercept the advancing English coming from that direction, was decided upon. Before the order to march was given, over three hundred muskets, brought from Buffalo, in excess of the number of men actually composing the army, were broken and cast into the muddy waters of Frenchman's Creek.

Billy Wood had not once faltered in his intention to carry out to the letter the instructions communicated to him in the brief note written by Grattan. Fear was an unknown element in

the Irish boy's composition. Not once had the prospect or possible result of a collision with the Canadian troops entered his mind. Mr. Grattan had instructed him to remain with the army and it was far from a disagreeable task, for there was a romantic fascination about the affair which appealed to his natural taste very strongly.

During the march down the river road and after the camp had been pitched on the shores of the creek, the lad had watched the movements of George Merton closely, and had wondered what possible interest the Buffalo lawyer could have in this moody, taciturn man, whose only desire seemed centered on a continued forward movement—whose whole thought appeared to be one of hatred of the enemy they were seeking.

He had endeavored to talk with the strange man whom he had readily identified from Grattan's description, but the repulse with which his advances had been met had prevented any repetition of the effort. So he had contented himself with simply keeping his eye upon the gray-haired soldier, not revealing even to his brother the character of the duty which had been assigned to him.

Only once during the afternoon had the boy's attention been diverted from Merton. That was when a squad of Fenians had come in from Fort Erie, the leader mounted on Marie Meredith's pony, Firefly. For a time Billy threatened to become an insubordinate. His blood fairly boiled to think that the delicate animal should be put

to such use, and he had hard work to restrain himself, but his better judgment prevailed, and he contented himself with the thought that if given the slightest opportunity he would get the little mare outside the lines and bend all his energies to returning her to Mr. Meredith's stable.

It was nearly 10 o'clock when the council of war was concluded and the order to march given. That it was not obeyed with great cheerfulness may be believed, for gradually the force had been depleted by desertion until not more than 450 men remained of the 800 who had marched down Niagara street in Buffalo, elated with the thought of conquest. Now, with the fact being made plain that they could expect no assistance from their friends on the other side of the river, it was a dispirited and saddened body of patriots who grimly fell into the ranks at the word, the instincts of the trained soldier still controlling, and began that uncertain march through the darkness, over strange roads and with the possibility of meeting a strong force of the English at any moment. Looking at it now, one must concede that had it not been for the ridiculous aspect presented, it would have been indeed a fine exhibition of heroism.

Through the long hours of the night the devoted little band tramped on. Black Creek was reached at midnight. Up to this time Col. O'Neil had led his men north on the road running along the river bank, but now, reaching a road which ran in a westerly direction, he swung his slender

column to the left and struck boldly across the country for the railroad, with the purpose of breaking the line of communication between the two divisions of the enemy he had every reason to believe was approaching.

Col. O'Neil's purpose was, as it afterward developed, to separate the two English armies, and to meet and engage one before the other could effect a junction with it. In this the sagacious Fenian commander succeeded perfectly, and had the reinforcements promised him arrived as expected, the record of the battle of Ridgeway would have been written in more vivid crimson than it really was.

At 3 o'clock on the morning of June 1st, the tired veterans of Col. O'Neil halted in the fields flanking the railway, midway between Stevensville and Chippawa. After five hours of constant marching over rough roads or through rougher fields, in the darkness of a moonless night, it is not to be wondered that the men dropped to the ground in utter exhaustion and after eating the last of the rations secured at Fort Erie, dropped off into deep, much needed sleep.

But Billy Wood was never more wide awake than when the resonant breathing of the men about him told him that Morpheus held the camp in his grasp. With well-defined purpose in view the latter had taken his position on the extreme edge of the camp, which had been selected in an open field, between the railroad and the highway. Opposite the camp, on the other side of the road,

there was a thick growth of small timber, while along the meadow side ran a high rail fence. Just inside this fence, attached by long halter straps to stakes driven into the ground, far enough apart to enable each animal to have grazing space fully a dozen feet in diameter, the horses which had up to this time been appropriated, were secured.

Satisfied that no enemy was present in the immediate vicinity, and confident that with the early morning would come the expected conflict, Col. O'Neil stationed not more than a half-dozen sentinels, one on either side of the camp in the highway and the others above and below the bivouac on the tracks of the railroad.

Along the woods and extending quite out into the field where the horses were picketed, dense shadows fell, and Billy had little trouble in gradually worming his way into the shadow, without detection. This accomplished, it was a small matter to reach the horses. Firefly was readily found near the centre of the line.

The intelligent animal rubbed her head against his arm as he patted her neck and spoke to her endearingly. Billy had for a long time taken all the care of the pony and the animal understood and apparently loved the kind-hearted boy nearly as much as her mistress.

Having located the pony, Billy went to the fence directly opposite, and selecting a corner where the rails appeared light and easy to handle, soon succeeded in opening a gap by throwing

the ends of the rails first one way then the other, until at that point the fence was lowered sufficiently to allow the mare to step over.

Then, with one glance about the sleeping camp to assure himself that his movements were so far undetected, he led Firefly into the road and after breaking a slender switch from a low-hanging tree, mounted and turned her head easterly, allowing her to walk slowly in the direction of the one guard who stood between himself and freedom from the camp.

Evidently the sentinel was dozing, for the pony's footfalls on the sandy road did not attract his attention until the animal was nearly upon him. Billy had somewhat counted upon this condition and had hoped that he might possibly steal by without being detected; but the sentinel had taken his position in the middle of the road, and was getting what rest he was surreptitiously obtaining, leaning upon his gun.

Suddenly, however, he raised his head and immediately his gun came to a charge, and the challenge was given.

Billy hesitated for a single instant only. He did not have the pass, neither had he the slightest desire to create any disturbance that would result in alarming the slumbering camp. His mind worked rapidly in the emergency and action was as prompt. The road was thickly shadowed at this point and he determined to trust to a rush to carry him past the drowsy sentinel. Once beyond him, the boy had no fear of the fleet lit-

the mare's out-distancing anything in the shape of horseflesh in the Fenians' possession, for the animals requisitioned were mostly plow horses, slow and cumbersome.

He drew sharply upon the rein opposite the side on which the guard stood, and with a twinge of conscience brought the lithe switch down sharply upon the pony's flank. He had never struck the affectionate animal before, and as the whip cut into the satin skin, he registered a mental vow that he would never do so again.

Smarting under the blow, the pony sprang forward with a snort of pain and anger, like an arrow from the bow, brushing the astonished guard in her progress, and nearly toppling him over.

For a moment Billy congratulated himself that his escape was to be easy, but he was doomed to disappointment, for the guard recovered himself quickly and raising his gun pointed it at the dim shape flying down the road and fired, taking as good aim as possible in the darkness.

Even before he heard the report of the musket Billy received a sudden blow on the back near his right shoulder, which nearly felled him from the mare. There was a stinging, burning sensation, which threatened to overpower him, but he struggled desperately to an upright position winding one hand in the flowing mane of the animal and unconsciously uttering a prayer for strength to permit him to reach his destination.

"Get up, Firefly, my beauty, go as ye never went before, fer I must git ye home t' Miss Meredith. Ye wa'nt made to carry Fenians, girl, don't let 'em git us!"

Anxiously the lad listened for sounds of pursuit but none reached his straining ear. Firefly needed no urging, for the thought of that undeserved and unusual blow, apparently still rankled. Like some mad thing the fleet beast sped over the level, well-beaten road. The fences sped by like a rushing stream and the clumps of woodland seemed to revolve as on an axis when the flying animal dashed past them.

Gradually the gray of morning began to lighten the east. Objects became more distinct; what had appeared simply dark shadows scattered at irregular intervals along the roadside, took on the form of substantial farmhouses. Crowing cocks betokened the approach of day, but still the faithful beast exerted herself to the utmost.

Billy was thoroughly familiar with the road over which he was now passing and he realized with a supreme satisfaction that he was nearly home. Someway he felt terribly tired. A strange and unknown weakness was gradually stealing over him. He felt himself sinking from the pony's back, but recovered himself once more and again spoke words of encouragement to the now steaming pony.

"Just a little further, Firefly, good girl, just a little further!"

What caused that dull ache in his shoulder ? What had come over him ; he could not move the arm on that side ? Then for the first time there came to the brave lad the full realization of what had befallen him.

"Yer shot, Billy ! That's what it means. That cowardly guard has plugged ye, sure's yer born. But ye won't give up ; ye'll hang on till ye take the mare home, if it's the last thing ye ever do !"

Again came the dizzy, faint feeling as the pony broke over the last hill and started down the slope with renewed speed, as in the early morning the brown roof and green blinds of the Meredith home came into view.

Bravely the determined boy fought against the numbing, terrifying stupor which seemed to clutch him in icy fingers. A mist swam before his eyes, his limbs relaxed their clasp upon the pony's side, his head dropped forward upon his breast, there was a spasmodic twisting of the muscles as he made one more desperate, but ineffectual effort to retain his seat, then pitched forward senseless upon the pony's neck. For a moment the limp body hung suspended, then the nerveless fingers slowly relaxed their grasp on Firefly's mane, and Billy Wood lay white and apparently lifeless at the turning of the Meredith lane.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARIE'S DOUBTS DISPELLED.

There, Joel Johnson, returning from his brief but exciting captivity, found him and with horror on his rugged face and deep pity in his heart, rushed to the house, roused its inmates and then, with Mr. Meredith's assistance, carried the white-faced, senseless boy into the sitting room, depositing him upon the white sheets of Mrs. Meredith's spare bed, which she had speedily prepared, unmindful of the red stain imprinted upon the snowy linen.

Mr. Meredith had hastily examined the nature of the lad's injury and had quieted the alarm of Marie and Rose Grattan, who with white faces watched him anxiously as he felt for the boy's pulse and were immeasurably relieved when he announced that the wound was not necessarily fatal, but that no attempt had better be made to remove the lad's clothing and dress his injury until the doctor arrived, for whom Johnson was at once despatched.

Stimulant had been procured, however, forced down the unconscious boy's throat and presently the liquor had its effect and Billy opened his eyes somewhat wearily, and looked enquiringly about him. Then as his gaze wandered to and was fixed upon Marie Meredith, he asked, anxiously :

"Did I get Firefly home all right, Miss Meredith?"

"Indeed you did, you dear boy, and I'm so glad. But you must be quiet, Billy, until the doctor comes and dresses your hurt. It may do you harm to talk."

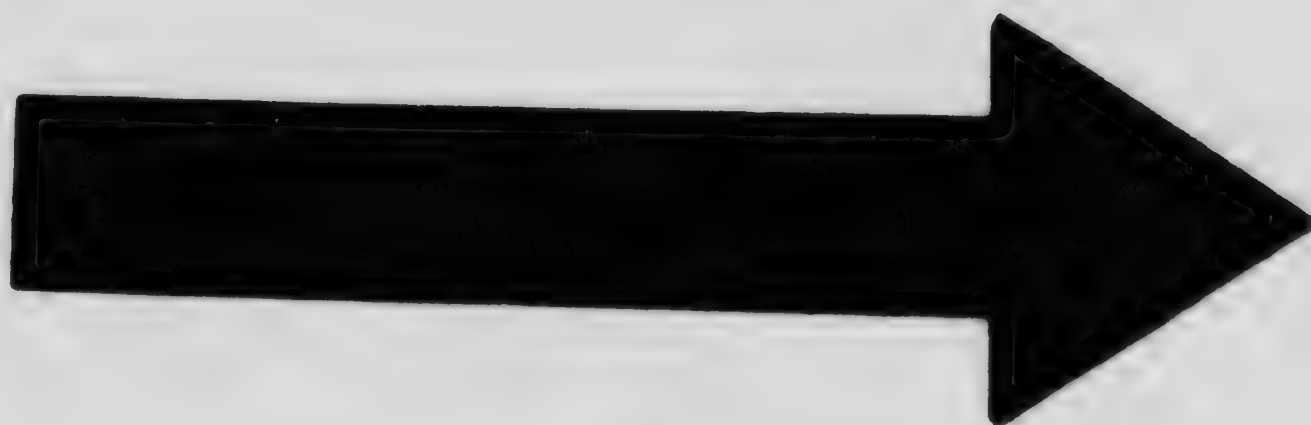
"But I don't just remember what happened."

"Never mind that now," Marie said soothingly. "You fell from the pony and Johnson found you in the lane. Don't talk now, there's a good boy, and when the doctor comes we'll get you fixed up so you can rest, and then you can tell us all about what you have been doing since you left home."

Then, shortly after Doctor Norton came, and with professional promptness cut away the clothing from the wound, finding that the bullet had not penetrated deeply, but had struck the shoulder blade and glanced, cutting a deep and painful but not dangerous furrow in the thick muscles at the base of the neck.

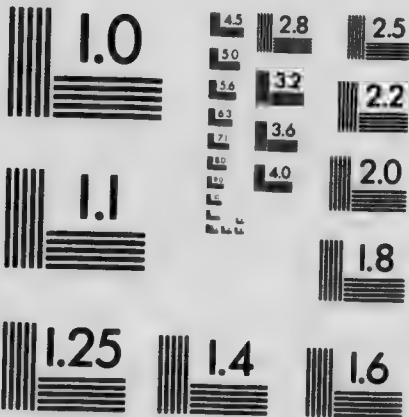
Marie Meredith again demonstrated her nerve, for she proved a valuable assistant to the surgeon, though her aunt had sought to perform that service herself. But Dr. Norton had driven them all out of the room except Marie and it was her firm, cool hands which helped to cleanse the ragged wound, to aid the surgeon with the strips of court plaster to hold the edges of the cut together and to adjust the bandages with which the job was completed.

"Better let him rest as much as he can, Miss



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Meredith," the doctor said when his patient had been made as comfortable as possible. "That has been a mighty painful wound and will give him some trouble for several days, but there isn't a particle of danger if he doesn't take cold. He's bled pretty freely and that weakened him. Mighty lucky the bullet glanced; if it hadn't it would have gone straight through the lung. How did it happen?"

"We haven't the slightest idea, doctor, unless he was shot by Fenians. We had reason to believe that the pony he rode home was in the possession of the marauders. He has not yet explained how he received the injury."

"Well, it's a gunshot wound all right," returned the doctor, and I don't doubt your surmise is correct. Don't bother him to learn the details before to-morrow. I'll call and see how he's getting on this evening."

Billy soon fell off to sleep, worn by the lack of rest and loss of blood, and when satisfied that the boy was resting quite naturally, Marie followed the others to breakfast. When she came back to the darkened room where Billy lay once more, she stopped at the door and gazed with astonishment at the scene presented. Billy was sleeping soundly, as his heavy breathing indicated, while at the foot of the bed, her hands clasped devoutly, knelt Betty Bowers.

"Please, God, don't let Billy die!" she pleaded in low tone, but sufficiently loud for the words to be distinguishable. Then, as she arose

and regarded the white face of the motionless figure on the bed, she murmured : "Poor Billy ! 'It was such a little thing he asked and I was mean to refuse. I wouldn't do it again.'"

Then she had crept softly to the bedside, and bending over with a wild, frightened look, had pressed her red lips as lightly as the falling thistle-down upon the white forehead, turning then and running swiftly and noiselessly away like a guilty thing.

Light as had been the caress it disturbed the sleeper. He stirred uneasily, and opened his eyes to see Marie Meredith standing by him, her glorious eyes dim with the mist of rising tears. She had stepped behind the curtains at sight of Betty and that conscience-smitten damsel had not known that there was an observer of her penance.

Billy smiled at sight of Miss Meredith and held out his hand for her to come nearer.

"Did Mr. Grattan come yit ?" he asked, when she had taken a seat upon the slide of the bed, and was clasping his brown hand in her own long, white fingers.

A pained look came into her beautiful face and she shook her head sadly.

"No, Billy, he has not come, and I'm afraid he never—never—will. If he is with—"

"Now, Miss Meredith, don't you go to feelin' hard ag'in Mr. Grattan. Nor don't you be a worryin' ! He's all right an' he's jist 's anxious t' be here 's ye are t' have him. I know ye think he's a Fenian. That's one of that Upton feller's

lies. Mr. Grattan told me t' tell ye that he wouldn't do nothin' but what ye'd think was all right when ye knew everything."

"Oh, Billy, did Harold—Mr. Grattan, say that?"

"Sure thing, Miss Meredith—said it an' meant it, every word. He ain't like that Upton feller, he's honest. He said a lot more, but it'll keep an' I'm sleepy."

"But, Billy, did you give him my letter?" she asked earnestly.

"Sure. Didn't ye send me with it?"

"But he hasn't written; he doesn't come! Oh, Billy, are you sure—very sure that Mr. Grattan isn't with those awful men?"

"Huh," was Billy's disgusted ejaculation. "Don't ye think he's in better business 'n tramp-in' around the country, stealin' horses an' chickens? But he couldn't be with 'em if he wanted to."

"Couldn't? Why not, Billy?"

"Because the last time I seen him he was headed straight for the Fort Erie jail. But don't ye worry, he'll be out 'n the shake ov a lamb's tail when he gits word to the consul."

Marie Meredith's mind was in a disturbed, an uncertain condition as she pondered what Billy Wood had told her. The lad's earnest defence of Harold Grattan was the most pleasing thing she had heard in many days and she found herself quite willing to accept his view of the character of the man she loved—yes, loved far

better at that time than she had before her wavering heart had listened to the aspersions of Clifford Upton; before the circumstantial evidence had accumulated so strongly against him.

How foolish she had been—how weak and disloyal to allow herself for a moment to doubt the integrity of the one whom from childhood she had looked upon as a pattern of honesty. She recalled what Rose had said to her regarding Lieut. Upton's purpose in seeking to erect a barrier between herself and Harold. She thought, with something like shame, of that acknowledgment to which she had listened in the adjoining room, when Upton had told her that he loved her and the evil light of his eyes had warned her of the character of his passion.

With self-condemnation she reflected upon the vacillation which had swayed her mind during the past four days, and as she thought of it, pity for the man who had suffered through her disloyalty, entered her soul.

"How cruel, how unjust, I have been," she moaned in spirit, "I shall never deserve the happiness that his love alone can give. How can I ever atone for the doubts I have harbored? And I may have lost him through my foolishness! Oh, if I should, I would not care to live!"

And as she pondered thus, there came rushing back upon her that irresistible tide of love which nothing can stem, nothing turn aside. No matter what might happen in the future; no matter though all the world condemned, her

heart and soul and brain would be loyal to its affection. She could defy them all; her mistrust and wavering were out of the past, they could never again arise to deaden the altar fires of her heart's sacrifice. And it had been the few crude sentences of faithful Billy Wood which had shamed her into loyalty. She realized this and glancing at the now sleeping boy, called down blessings upon his curly head.

Adjusting the shades and closing the door quietly, so as not to again disturb the slumberer, she passed quietly out of the house and walked down through the cool June morning to a small summer-house, a grape arbor, near the lower end of the garden, which was her favorite spot for meditation or the perusal of an entertaining book. She wished to be alone, alone with the new and strangely sweet contentment of mind which had suddenly come to her. Ever since that unpleasant visit of Lieut. Upton she had been constantly irritated by an unrest and nervous dread which she had never experienced before. Now the clouds were all rolled away by some unseen, magic force and the bright light of perfect faith and confidence fell about her like a strange, incomprehensible radiance. Never had the sky seemed so blue, never the earth so beautiful. She was a new woman in a new paradise.

For some time she sat there in the rustic seat, in ecstasy of her recovered happiness. With the full return of her faith had disappeared all dread of Grattan's failure to come. He could

not fail with her overpowering love appealing to him. He must come ; there could be no other ending. A step sounded upon the gravel path leading to the summer-house. Her eyes kindled. It must be Rose, and now she would have the opportunity to tell Harold's sister that there was to be no more wavering, no more fickleness. The step sounded at the door, and she glanced up with joyful eagerness, but the light in her big eyes faded, the smiles about the tempting lips settled into straight, hard lines, as she saw, not Rose Grattan, but the one person on earth she least desired to meet—Lieut. Clifford Upton.

She did not move, she did not indicate by the slightest gesture or expression of countenance that his coming was a pleasure, that his presence was welcome. There was a frown of displeasure upon her face, a scorn that Lieut. Upton in all his life had never observed there before. She regarded him coolly, with not so much as a trace of enquiry in her usually expressive eyes.

But he had evidently come on a mission which he intended to perform, for though the look of anticipation which had rather intensified the beauty of his boyish face when he first appeared, had suddenly faded, he stepped inside the little arbor and held out his hand.

She barely touched it with the tips of her fingers, though he would have clasped hers boldly, and half turning away, coldly waited for him to speak.

"Mrs. Meredith told me she thought I would

find you here," he said, somewhat disturbed by her attitude toward himself, something so different from anything he had seen before. He had observed her when angered, as she had been on the occasion of his last visit, but this icy reserve was a new characteristic, and it worried him, especially that he should apparently be made the object of her evident displeasure.

"I was sent out by Lieut.-Col. Booker to learn what I could of the condition of the country between Stevensville and Fort Erie," he continued, "and being so near I felt that I must improve the opportunity afforded to see you, Marie, before the battle takes place."

"Battle?"

She had no knowledge of the relative positions of the English and Fenian forces. She had, of course, expected that there would be a clash between the two sometime unless the invaders should awake to the danger into which they had blundered, but that a battle was imminent, she had not even dreamed.

"Well, probably it will not be of sufficient importance to so characterize it," he observed, "but it is almost certain that there will be an engagement of some sort before the day is over, and I felt it my duty to come to you before some unfortunate circumstance might arise to prevent my making plain some things to which I referred when I was here before."

"You speak in riddles, Lieut. Upton."

"Have you forgotten our last interview?"

"No, no, would that I could forget it! Would that it had never taken place!"

"Why, why do you speak like that, Marie—dearest—"

"Stop, Lieut. Upton? Did you come here to insult me again? Was it not enough that you have nearly broken my heart with your insinuations and slanders against Harold Grattan, that you should add to my shame by asking me to listen to endearing terms from your lips? Are you mad?"

She drew her regal figure to its full height and regarded him with an expression of contempt which cut into his soul like a merciless knife. He shrank before the fury of her scorn, and stammered:

"What has come over you, Marie? Certainly you were not like this when last we met! You would listen then and I fancied—"

"Yes, I know what you fancied," she interrupted, her indignation mastering her, "and perhaps in my weakness I was in a measure responsible for your misled imaginings. You thought that I was silly and wicked enough to believe your inuendoes and misrepresentations—that I would forget that my word was given, my hand plighted. I was weak and vacillating; I considered you a friend, and I own with shame that I almost believed you, Lieut. Upton. But the spell has passed. I shall never doubt again—never!"

"But you have misjudged me, Marie! Have

we not always been friends? It was and is my misfortune, perhaps, that you are the one woman my heart has ever longed for; it is not a crime. Whatever I have done has been with the one impelling motive to save you from greater unhappiness. I love you, no power on earth can prevent my loving you. It may be hopeless, but I shall keep on loving you until you are that traitor's wife, if he escapes the just punishment of his crime against the Queen and you become his wife; and then I shall continue to love you!"

She shrank away from him as he came a step nearer, his eyes blazing with the intensity of his feeling, his face flushed and livid, his voice shrill and hysterical. For the first time in her life fear of the man came over her and it was by an effort she restrained the call for help which came to her tongue.

"Don't! Don't talk like that!" she pleaded. "Are you mad, Clifford Upton? You must be insane to think of such a thing, much less to utter such wild words. Your own acts prove you are insincere. Were it otherwise you would spare me this."

"Perhaps I am mad," he raved, "to speak harshly to you, as I have. But I thought you cared; I believed that if I brought you the proof of Harold Grattan's disloyalty, you would keep your word and give him up—that there might be hope for me. He is even now under arrest, the certain proof of his guilt is in the hands of the authorities at Ottawa; there is no hope

that he can escape. Some one must have lied to you, Marie, but it was not me."

"No one has lied to me," she said more mildly than when last speaking, but there was the firmness of strong, unwavering conviction in her tone. "No one has lied to me, Lieut. Upton, and I am as certain of Harold Grattan's innocence of the charge brought against him, as I am of my own loyalty, and that, even yourself, will not question."

"But some one has told you this, and they have sought to deceive you."

"Some one has told me that he is not disloyal, and I believe it. Even if through the strange vagaries of the law he should be convicted of conspiracy or treason, I should still love him—still believe him guiltless!"

"Who has so grievously misled you?" he asked, a sudden thought entering his excited brain. "Was it Major Meredith—was it your brother?"

"My brother? Major Meredith? What do you mean? I have no brother in America. What has come over you, Lieut. Upton? Are you losing your mind?"

"Perhaps. Sometimes, in fact, I believe I am insane—insane in hope; that the happiness of your love could ever come to me. But I know what I am talking about at present. Can it be possible that you have not been acquainted with the fact that your brother, Douglas Meredith, is

in the province of Ontario at this moment ? Have you not met him ? Has he not told you ?"

Marie Meredith was at last really frightened. Surely this man must be mad. Her brother ? What an improbable—an impossible thing ! Either his passion for herself, or the excitement of the Fenian raid had—it must have—turned his brain. She estimated her chances of being able to get by him and escaping to the house ; but he blocked the single door of the little summer-house, and if his designs were evil, which she could no longer doubt, there was no possibility that he would permit her to depart. She must be discreet and sagacious. She remembered that the only hope of controlling an insane person, other than by force, was to humor them, to seem to coincide with their ideas. So, while her heart beat like a trip-hammer and she trembled with the fear which was consuming her, she replied with wonderful calmness :

"Indeed you are telling me a most remarkable thing, Lieut. Upton. Personally I have never heard a word from my brother in Scotland, and uncle has not in some years. Can it be possible that you have been correctly informed ?"

"Quite possible, Marie," returned Upton, elated that he had the opportunity to disclose what had, his quick reasoning told him, been intended for a secret, though he could discover no apparent reason for concealment. "Did you not meet Major Meredith during your recent visit to Toronto ?"

"I met him for a few minutes at the drill shed the night before we left for home, but only as I should meet any person by chance."

"And is it possible he did not disclose his relationship?"

Suddenly there came to her mind the strange nervousness of the English officer when she had been introduced to him. Could it have meant more than at the time she had suspected? Then memory recalled that there had been a strange familiarity in the expression of the major's face, which she had, however, studied but superficially. She remembered the surprised look which had come into James Meredith's face on being presented, a fact which at the time had not prompted a second thought. Could such a thing be possible? Again she felt her feet slipping in the sands of doubt as a result of Clifford Upton's revelations.

"Certainly not," she replied presently.

"But Rose knew, I think; has she not told you?"

"Nothing. Oh, Lieut. Upton, you cannot be serious in what you have been saying. It all seems so strange; so impossible."

"But entirely true. I have it on good authority that Major Meredith intended to make you a visit before proceeding to Toronto, but received orders in Buffalo to join his regiment at once on reaching that city. It's very strange, however, that you were not acquainted with the real facts. Really, Marie, I believe that Rose feared

that such knowledge might in some way interfere with the prospects of her own brother in relation to yourself." His mind was fertile in expedients. "Of course, I can't account for your brother's action in the matter. Rose evidently managed the matter on the occasion of their ride from Buffalo, of which you have, of course, heard, have you not?"

"Yes."

"That's the only solution I can discover. Major Meredith would never approve of the marriage of his sister with a Fenian, especially as the member of the Brotherhood under consideration, by so becoming, proves himself a traitor and a criminal."

Her face, which had undergone a change of expression during the reference to Major Meredith, suddenly hardened again.

"You must not say those things again, Lieut. Upton. I will not listen to you. Please let me pass."

But he only blocked her way more determinedly.

"But I may never have another opportunity to prove that I have not been the jealous, deceitful, mistaken person you have chosen to believe me," he said. "Read that. It is the proof of Grattan's guilt!"

He took a long pocketbook from an inner pocket of his uniform, extracted a folded sheet of note paper and handed it to Marie. She took it mechanically, and opening it read that mysteri-

ous letter from Gen. Sweeney, which Upton had shown to Major Meredith.

Her face grew a shade paler as she perused the suspicious document. Upton studied her with elation upon his flushed face, a gleam of triumph in his eager eyes.

"How do you explain that, Marie? How can you explain it except to admit the disloyalty of the man to whom it is addressed?"

"Leave that to me, Lieut. Upton! I am quite competent for the task and I promise you that it will be performed to the complete satisfaction of Miss Meredith, if not to yourself."

A shadow had darkened the doorway of the arbor, the voice brought a wave of gladness to Marie Meredith's face, a frown of resentment to Upton's. Harold Grattan pushed his way past the young officer somewhat rudely and then with a cry of joy the girl was clasped in her lover's strong arms and was sobbing upon his breast.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNFOUNDED SUSPICION.

Lieut. Clifford Upton started back with an ejaculation which sounded strangely like an oath. His face had paled at the first sound of Grattan's voice, and now his eyes flamed with a wild look as he regarded the welcome accorded the man he had sought to supplant in Marie Meredith's affections, realizing that his efforts had come to naught ; that he had lost even the friendship of the woman he now realized he loved with every fibre of his being.

"There, Marie, dearest, there is no occasion for tears," Grattan urged, stroking her hair and seeking to raise her head that he might look into her eyes. "If this gentleman has been annoying you, I will take good care that he has no opportunity to repeat the offence. It would seem," he continued, turning his gaze upon the sullen Upton, "that just at this time an officer of the Canadian volunteers would have a more fitting opportunity for a display of his warlike talents, than in badgering a defenceless woman !"

"Be careful, Grattan, be careful that you don't go too far," Lieut. Upton flashed. "You must remember that I am only human and I will not answer for consequences if you goad me too far. It should be enough that you have won Marie !" he said bitterly.

"Thank God that she was not like other women !" said Grattan devoutly. "Had she been other than the true, brave girl that she is, your plans to ruin me in her regard must surely have succeeded. You ask for an explanation of this letter, Upton. Did you tell her how it came into your possession ?"

Lieut. Upton did not reply. He glowered in sullen silence, eyeing the letter which Grattan had taken from Marie Meredith's hand and now held aloft, as he bent his keen glance upon the young officer's fairly livid face. The latter looked as though contemplating a spring to secure the missive with which he had anticipated to accomplish so much, but seemed to think better of it after contemplating his rival's sinewy form, and settled back into his sullen attitude.

"No, I know that you did not," cried Grattan, "you didn't dare ! You know full well that she could never commend the action, even had I been all that you sought to make me appear. I'll tell you, Marie ! He took it from the desk of my office in Buffalo—he—"

"Stop, Harold Grattan ! You shall go no further in your aspersions against me ; you shall not degrade me in the eyes of the woman I love, by implying that I am a thief !"

Upton's face had gone white, his hands clenched with the force of passion, the veins about his temples swelling and throbbing as if about to burst.

Marie, with her arm about Grattan's neck,

drew his head down until his ear was at her lips.

"Don't, Harold, dear," she whispered. "See how strangely he looks ! Don't anger him more. You have me, don't punish him too severely for remember, he loves me too ! Clifford would never stoop to such an act, I feel sure of that."

Upton gave her a grateful glance.

"You know me too well to think for a moment that I would descend to such baseness," he said, half pleadingly. "I tell you truthfully that I never knew of the existence of the letter from which that copy was made until it was shown to me in the office of Gen. Napier in Ottawa. It was sent to headquarters by one of the government's secret service men, along with other evidence in connection with the Fenian invasion plan. I read it carefully and copied it from memory, with the one purpose of proving to you that what I told you that night was well founded. I believed I was doing right. I loved you too well to see you deceived by this man, whom evidence went to show was conspiring against the government you loved and which I serve. Do you not believe me, Marie ?"

"Yes, yes, I do, I do ! I could never believe that you would do that, much as you might have been tempted," she replied earnestly, strong pity in tone and expression. "You have been hasty in your conclusions, Harold, I believe that Lieut. Upton was doing only what he deemed was right. You have accused him unjustly !"

"Doing right ?" Grattan pushed her away,

almost angrily, then continued, all his impulsive nature aroused into quick jealousy of the man who had aspired to win Marie away from him. "Was it the act of a friend for him to bring to you this letter which, read with prejudice to interpret, might appear condemnatory of my motives? I am glad indeed to believe that an agent of the government is responsible for its presence this side of the line. I have never been quite able to believe that he could forget his manhood sufficiently to purloin it. At first I thought it must be so, but fought against the suspicion. It did not appear possible unless—unless his desire to win you away from me overcame every scruple. But you say he did right—you urge me to spare him. Has he not come near enough to wrecking our happiness? Do you love him, that you are so prompt to come to his defence—so ready to plead his cause?"

Once Marie Meredith would have resented such an outburst. She would have turned coldly away from the man she loved and, sorely as her heart might have been pained, would have resolutely put thought of forgiveness away from her. Now she stood motionless where his angry gesture had sent her, the old defiance gone entirely from her eyes, nothing but sorrow in its place—sorrow and love for the only man she had ever loved—ever could love—though for the moment he had doubted her, worse, had accused her of disloyalty.

"No, I do not love him," she said slowly and

calmly, "but I would have you merciful."

On the instant Grattan's manner changed. Inwardly he condemned himself for his foolish exhibition of jealousy, saying contritely enough :

"Forgive me, Marie, I have spoken and acted impulsively and foolishly. But my mind has been greatly disturbed because of you, for two days. You gave me some reason, did you not ? Yet all that has passed, let us look to the future. It may have been a greater kindness than you thought, Lieut. Upton, that you brought a copy of that letter. But for this meeting and its results I should never have been quite sure how it came into the government's hands—there would always have been more or less of doubt. Now you are fully cleared of suspicion in that direction. You must admit that I had some reason, but I am glad to admit that I did not fully understand what honor meant with a true Englishman. Here is the letter which, but for my forethought in sending a full description of its purport, duly authenticated, to the authorities, together with some further information concerning myself, might have proven my ruin. Take it, though it is not worth a penny. As I say, the authorities at Ottawa knew and a single line from the American consul at Fort Erie, was all that was required to secure my release from arrest, an arrest made possible by the charges which were preferred solely on the strength of this communication from Gen. Sweeney, which

referred to a purely personal matter, and in no way to the invasion movement."

He extended the letter towards Upton and the latter took it without a word, thrusting it into his pocket. Grattan held out his arms to Marie, and she ran back to him, with trusting confidence.

"Soon," he said, "within a few days at most, I shall be able to explain the whole matter fully. To do so before the proper time arrives, would be to disclose a secret affecting others, and if you will only trust me, every suspicion will be allayed. Can you do this?"

He gazed down into her now happy eyes with earnest pleading and saw mirrored there the answer he sought.

"I do trust you implicitly," she said, "I shall never doubt you again. Forgive me that for a moment my faith was shaken!"

"I am myself principally to blame," Grattan returned. "There is nothing to forgive. Had I told you more in the beginning I should have saved you much unpleasantness. Upton, really and truly I'm sorry for you, more sorry than you can ever know. I can realize in a measure what it would have been to me to have lost her, and can appreciate what it is to you. Can we not still be friends?"

For some time Lieut. Upton had said nothing. He had stood there as if carved in stone, his dark eyes observing every motion of the reunited pair, his quick ear drinking in every word

of the half-whispered conversation. His face was paled and flushed alternately ; a vengeful gleam had intensified the glitter of his eyes, the glitter which Marie had noted and which had frightened her. A sudden chill came to her heart as in response to Grattan's query he started forward and exclaimed with dramatic force :

"Friends ? Friends with you, a Fenian spy ? Oh, you cannot dupe me, Harold Grattan ! I know you, have known you ever since we were playmates and Marie, sweet, gentle, loving Marie, was a little girl in short frocks. Do you remember how handsome she was, Grattan, with her golden curls and her white, baby face ? You loved her even then and so did I ; but you stole her as you believed I stole that traitorous letter. Much good may it do you. You may fill her ears with lies ; you may weave your spell over her again for a time ; but you'll lose her in the end ! You'll lose her in the end !"

As he ceased speaking a revolver gleamed in his hand, leveled directly at Miss Meredith's heart. Grattan had become suspicious as Upton's words became more incoherent, and fearing some serious demonstration, had been watching his every movement. As Upton's hand moved to the breast of his coat Grattan had taken a step nearer, and as the weapon was drawn, he sprang forward, seized Upton's wrist and with a powerful twist caused the revolver to fall to the ground where it exploded harmlessly. Then he grappled with the crazed officer and sought to subdue him.

Grattan was a good deal of an athlete and had the advantage of considerably greater weight, but Upton's unnatural strength more than balanced any advantage which the lawyer might have possessed under ordinary circumstances. Try as he might, he saw that he was gaining no advantage. In fact it appeared to him that he was losing ground in the terrible struggle for the mastery.

"Mr. Meredith !" he called, fearing that Upton might succeed even in freeing himself, and Marie, hearing the cry, and realizing the danger, thoughtfully seized the fallen revolver and ran like the wind to the house, wildly calling for assistance. Then, as Mr. Meredith and Johnson came hurrying to the rescue, Upton, even in his frenzy realizing that help for his antagonist was at hand, by a superhuman effort tore himself from Grattan's weakening grasp, and with a cry like a frightened animal, cleared the low fence of the yard at a bound, leaped upon his horse, which he had left standing in the lane, seized the stout riding whip which was attached by a loop to the pommel of the saddle, lashed the animal into a mad gallop, riding at break-neck speed away in the direction of Stevensville. Above the clatter of the galloping hoofs came back that maniacal laugh and the wild words :

"You'll lose her in the end ! You'll lose her in the end !"

"Poor fellow ! Poor fellow !" exclaimed Grattan, struggling up from the ground, where

the lunatic's last desperate effort had hurled him. "He's crazed indeed; he will do himself some harm. I must follow him. Get me a horse, Johnson."

By this time the entire family, including Rose Grattan, were gathered on the lawn. Billy Wood alone was missing, but his white face appeared at the window. There were loud protestations against Grattan's carrying out his expressed intention, but he was firm.

"I feel, some way, as though I may have been in a measure responsible for his mental condition," he said resolutely, "and I should be a coward indeed to allow him to go that way without taking some measures to have him restrained."

"But he may do you some harm," pleaded Marie and Rose in one breath.

"I shall provide against that," said Grattan confidently. "There is sure to be men about the Smuggler's Tavern, who can easily be induced to accompany me. I feel that I must do what I can. There will be no danger. Really I believe that the paroxysm will soon pass and that if we succeed in overhauling him, he will be found quite tractable. Here's the horse. Don't worry, I'll be back for dinner, sure."

He rode away with that, leaving them standing there, numb with the horror of it all; Rose and Marie clasped in each other's arms, sobbing in dread of the worst; Mrs. Meredith seeking to soothe them and James Meredith sadly shaking

his head at the strange and incomprehensible developments of the morning.

But even before the members of the family had returned to anything like their normal condition, while still the hysterical weeping of Rose Grattan continued, a sound reached the ears of the waiting group which like magic drew their attention from the possible result of Grattan's quest, and caused them to gaze from one to another, in eager questioning.

Off in the direction of the Smuggler's Tavern, which stood at the intersection of the Ridgeway and Garrison roads, two principal thoroughfares running at right angles to each other, there had come the irregular report of firearms, followed instantly by volley firing, rapid and insistent.

To Marie Meredith came first a realization of what that strange fusilade meant. She recalled the words of Lieut. Upton, and exclaimed excitedly :

"It is the troops ! They have met the Fenians and the battle is on ! Heaven help us all if the invaders should win !"

"I believe you're right, Marie," cried James Meredith, "and they are coming nearer. See how much more distinct the reports are."

The crash of musketry was now almost incessant. A spent bullet struck the side of the house close to where Meredith was standing, denting the clapboard and falling to the ground. He stooped and picked the leaden pellet up.

"We must get inside, quickly," he said earnestly.

All obeyed promptly, but no more bullets came that way. Evidently the chance shot had been fired at random by some skulker who had not been engaged in the real battle at all.

And so Harold Grattan rode on, directly into the battle of Ridgeway, and as a revelation of the real danger which had overtaken him was disclosed to Marie Meredith, sitting with Rose in her own pretty room, and to Rose herself, the two girls, clasped in each other's arms, stood at the window looking out in the direction from whence the roar of combat came and together watched with straining eyes for some sign of his return.

Grattan rode forward along the country road at the best pace possible. All ill-feeling toward Upton had vanished as he realized the terrible misfortune which had befallen the young lieutenant. In fact, he now attributed much that Upton had recently been doing against himself to this mental aberration which had so suddenly and mysteriously affected him. Under the circumstances he could well be charitable and he was fully resolved to aid the unfortunate in his extremity, if such a thing were possible.

For nearly a mile he rode without catching a glimpse of the man he was pursuing. The marks of Lieut. Upton's horse's hoofs were plain in the sandy road, and Grattan could readily perceive by the way they were placed that the mad rider

was still urging his horse forward at break-neck speed.

Suddenly he drew in his horse and scrutinized the road beneath him with anxious gaze. All trace of the trail he had been following had disappeared. Evidently Upton had turned from the main road ; but where ? Grattan turned the animal he rode, about, and rode slowly back over the road. Twenty rods from the point where he had made his discovery he came upon the tracks again, where they turned toward the side of the highway, and were lost altogether on the sod of the meadow to which they led.

In vain he scanned the wide stretch of field and wood hoping to obtain a glimpse of the crazed rider, but not a soul was in sight, not a moving thing within the range of his vision. From the point where he had passed, a narrow field lay between the road and a piece of woodland covering a slight elevation. This field was unfenced, and Grattan rode up from the highway to this timber. From the summit of the elevation he could obtain an almost uninterrupted view of the country for several miles in either direction.

The road upon which he had been riding was known as the Ridge highway, which connects the village of Ridgeway and Fort Erie. From the point where Grattan stood, he could follow with his eye the course of the Ridge road, nearly to the village of Ridgeway, possibly three miles away.

Near him, away to the left, ran another highway from the Ridge road westerly, termed the Bertie road, and a mile further north on the Ridge road the Garrison road crossed. At this point was the Smugglers' Tavern before referred to. At the intersection of the Bertie and Garrison roads stood a large farmhouse, flanked on either side of the highway by quite extensive apple orchards. Between the two cross roads and on either side of the Ridge road, far as the eye could reach, was a succession of other orchards and woods and grain fields.

Although the elevation up which Grattan had ridden was comparatively slight it was sufficient to raise him somewhat above the general level and was an excellent point of observation. This elevation ran parallel to the Ridge road, and it was timber crested for some distance. Grattan, believing that Upton had ridden through this belt of timber and continued his course north on the east side of the ridge, urged his horse through the bushes for the few rods which it extended east and west, and then continued his own way toward Ridgeway through the open fields, carefully scanning the ground in the hope of once more discovering the tracks of Upton's horse.

Perhaps a quarter of a mile ahead the timber ended, and Grattan rode onward more rapidly, anticipating a better and broader view, once he came beyond the timber. In this respect he was not disappointed, but the sight which met his eye as he came into a large field at the extreme point

of the woods, caused him for the moment to forget Lieut. Upton entirely and to hastily urge his horse back into the underbrush, dismount, tie the animal securely to a small tree and then creep stealthily back to the edge of the wood, eagerly and swiftly.

Down the Ridge road, between the two intersecting cross-roads, in solid column and marching with the precision of veterans, came a long detachment of Canadian volunteers, a part of the division clad in the green and gold of the Queen's Own, the balance in the scarlet coats of the English regulars.

The whinney of a horse in the vicinity of the Bertie road at the same time attracted his attention, and turning a searching glance to the apple orchards surrounding the farmhouse, he was somewhat startled to discover that a rather formidable force was congregated there. This latter detachment had evidently discovered the approach of the Canadians, for Grattan could hear quick, soldierly orders being given, and the men among the apple trees, entirely concealed from the sight of the troops, he observed were being deployed into a long skirmish line, extending across the Ridge road, the right flank reaching well up the raise of ground toward the point from which Grattan was now a most interested spectator.

Instinctively he had realized almost at a glance that the nearer body, that concealed from the approaching Canadians, was the army of invasion, and this inference was made certain when

he discovered an officer, whom he at once recognized as Col. O'Neil, riding along the skirmish line, evidently instructing the men in their assigned duty.

Back of the skirmish line, well across the Bertie road in the orchard south of the farmhouse and on the edge of the woods flanking it, Grattan saw other moving forms and interpreted it to mean that the entire Fenian force, under its brave though perhaps mistaken commander, was waiting there in practical ambush, the approach of the defenders of the Dominion.

Again Grattan turned his gaze toward the Ridge road.

With unbroken line, shoulder to shoulder, marching as easily and evenly as if on parade, evidently ignorant of the near proximity of the Fenian force, the volunteers swung down the road. The column was led by the 46th, the handsome ensign of the battalion proudly borne by McEachren, who was to become so soon the first sacrifice to that heroic but sadly misdirected effort for Irish freedom.

It was now nearly noon and the hot sun was pouring down a fiery benediction, but still the clerks and university students, though little used to such severe exertion, held their own bravely and marched on into the death-trap prepared for them.

Suddenly, when he was half tempted to secure his horse and ride to warn the troops of the ambush ahead, impressed as he was with the unfair-

ness of it all, Grattan observed that his assistance was not needed. A horseman was discovered in the road ahead of the approaching troops, riding at top speed from the direction of the concealed Fenians. His hat was off, his hair flying in the wind, his arms wildly waving a warning to the Canadians. It was Upton; but how he escaped detection and capture by the men of Col. O'Neil Grattan could not conceive. The very boldness of the rider's action had alone made the attempt possible.

As Upton approached, the marching column suddenly halted and excitement in the ranks was quickly apparent. Officers dashed here and there wildly waving their swords; rear companies of the column were marched to the right and left flanks of the leading company, and in an incredibly brief time a somewhat formidable line of battle was formed, extending for a considerable distance east and west of the Ridge road.

Another moment and puffs of white smoke were observed by Grattan to rise from the shadows of the apple orchard and float away on the light breeze which was blowing from the west; then came the irregular crack of the Springfields. But even before this significant sound had reached the ears of the intent observer on the ridge, he had seen the ensign carried at the front of the advancing line go down and its gallant bearer pitch headlong into the dust of the road. Almost instantly there was a flash of fire along the entire length of the Canadian battle line, and Grattan

heard the storm of bullets like a wind, sweep through the tops of the apple trees. But the Canadian pieces had been aimed too high and there was no apparent serious results to the Fenians' thin line.

Grattan was so thoroughly absorbed by the tragedy being enacted in the little valley that he was oblivious to anything occurring in the immediate vicinity, so that it is not remarkable that he started with an ejaculation of surprise and something akin to alarm, as a hand was laid on his shoulder and a voice exclaimed :

"You are my prisoner, sir. Consider yourself under arrest !"

Grattan flung off the restraining hand, turned swiftly and raised his clenched fist to strike, but the expression of his face suddenly changed. the angry light left his eyes, and he smiled broadly as he extended his open palm.

"Heavens, Meredith, what an unceremonious way you English have ! I really thought the Fenians had me. What in the world are you doing here, and why aren't you with your command ?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

UPTON'S RIDE TO DEATH.

Major Meredith was not in uniform but was dressed in a suit of dark cloth and carried a cane evidently cut from the undergrowth of the wood, a stout hickory stick. With this exception he was apparently unarmed, yet had one observed closely, a protuberance under the light coat at either thigh would have carried the impression of two handy revolvers.

"I am detailed by Gen. Napier to observe the movements of the troops in action," he said, taking Grattan's hand and pressing it warmly. "Fortune has indeed been kind to afford me such a favorable opportunity to view the engagement, which appears likely to become quite a skirmish. It is more than likely that the Toronto boys will not hesitate to avenge the fall of McEachren. Surely a better point of observation could not be obtained. But what are you doing here, Grattan? How does it come that you are not on the firing line? From what I have heard since meeting you in Buffalo I should quite naturally have expected to find you in command of a company of those bushwhackers down there in the orchard."

"No," retorted Grattan easily, detecting the raillery of the major's voice. "that sort of thing is not exactly my taste. I suppose, of course,

you have heard all the ridiculous stories which have been set afloat regarding my connection with and interest in this reckless invasion, but I am sure you have not believed them. The idea is too utterly absurd."

"No, I have not," returned Meredith with frank heartiness. "I admit that I was somewhat confused at your words that night in the hotel, but since I have learned the real nature of the charges which have been made against you, and have read the Sweeney letter, I have been impressed with the improbability of it all. I thought I knew your purpose and I have been confident that at the proper time you would be able to explain your position satisfactorily. I discovered certain things in relation to Lieut. Upton which served to relieve my mind greatly on your account."

"Then he talked to you?" Grattan asked earnestly.

"Yes, he talked too much," Major Meredith returned, with a suggested humor in his tone. "Upton has no love for you, Grattan."

"A fact I have long since discovered," was the other's comment, again turning his gaze in the direction of the Canadian line of battle, which was being steadily advanced upon the unseen foe, volley after volley being poured into the woods and orchards where the Fenian force still persistently clung, as yet apparently little injured by the English fusilade. "Poor fellow ! poor fellow ! He has been seriously misled by his

own fancies. Poor, unfortunate Upton, he deserves a better fate !"

"Why, what's happened to him ?" enquired Meredith, earnestly. "It was a brave thing he did out there, riding through the Fenian line and bringing the knowledge of the enemy's position. Col. Booker had no idea the Fenians were within miles of this place."

"It was the act of an insane person," said Grattan sadly. "I cannot but overlook any injustice he has done me, when I think of his condition. Major Meredith, Lieut. Upton's mind is a blank ; he has not really known what he was doing for some time !"

And then tersely and rapidly Grattan related the remarkable incidents of the morning and the circumstances which had been responsible for his own presence where Meredith had found him. The latter shuddered as he realized the danger in which Marie had been placed through Upton's insane ideas of revenge. He seized Grattan's hand warmly again, when the latter had finished.

"Poor girl," he said, "how unhappy she must have been, how sadly her mind must have been disturbed. I am sure now it would have been far better had we confided in her at first. I don't think you can really blame her for having misgivings. I admit frankly that I was myself somewhat in doubt of your intentions, for which I am heartily sorry. Still you have no further cause for fear that I shall fail you. But what of

Merton? Is he with the Fenians as you believed?"

"I think so, I have every reason to believe so," returned Grattan. "I know that he crossed the river with them and he is undoubtedly with that advance skirmish line, for he was apparently one of the most eager of O'Neil's men when they were preparing to cross. Strange, isn't it?"

"Most s'range," returned Major Meredith sadly. "But suppose, Grattan, suppose he should be killed?"

"I have been worrying about that myself," said Grattan anxiously. "I had hoped to prevent the possibility of his being subjected to the danger of battle, but Dan McGonagle's ridiculous warrant was interposed just in time to block my plans. The best we can do now is to await developments, trust to good fortune that he will not become a target for a Canadian bullet, and take advantage of the first opportunity that is presented to obtain possession of his person. How large is the English force?"

"Less than a thousand in the present force engaged," returned Meredith. "There are ten companies of the 46th; fifty men of the York Rifles; thirty of the Caledonia Rifles, and probably 300 more of the 13th Battery of Hamilton. How strong are the Fenians?"

"Little more than half that number. There have been many desertions since they crossed the river, and so far I am confident there have been no accessions to their numbers. Without rein-

forcements they cannot hope to hold out very long, for I suppose more Canadian troops will be hurried forward rapidly."

"Assuredly. Col. Peacocke is supposed to be in the vicinity of Stevensville with fully a thousand more. A party composed of the members of the Welland Field Battery and the Dunnville Naval Brigade has been despatched on board the steamer Robb, to Fort Erie, and if these men down here in the orchard constitute the complete Fenian force, they are even now practically surrounded. We have good assurance that no further aid will come to them from the American side. That government was slow to act, but it appears has at last successfully blocked the plans of the ringleaders of the invasion movement."

"Then we may hope that the struggle will be of short duration and that we shall soon be able to find and establish Merton's identity, placing him in a place of safety. I must admit to you, Major Meredith, so that you may have no misunderstanding of my sentiments, that personally my sympathies are with the Irish cause. Meredith turned upon him with anxious enquiry. "I am frank to tell you," continued Grattan, "that I should earnestly approve any plan by which the injustice Erin has suffered at the hands of the aristocracy of Britain, could be repressed. I am an Irishman and the wrongs of my father's country have been dinned into my ears ever since I was old enough to understand the meaning of the word liberty. But I have no particle of sym-

pathy for the absurd and wicked plan of Canadian conquest. From the first I have worked among the adherents of Gen. Sweeney, seeking to turn their thoughts from such a wild and unwarranted course. Now that efforts to prevent the awful blunder, by which Irish independence will be delayed much longer, have failed, I am as anxious as yourself, or any son of Canada, to have the miserable affair over as soon as possible. Gen. Sweeney would have been Ireland's saviour, but in reality he will have driven the last nail in the coffin of her hopes."

"I believe I understand you," Major Meredith returned quietly, "and you need to have no fear that I shall think the less of you for your devotion to a principle. What is a difference of individual opinion among friends? Let that matter drop and be buried, while we devote our efforts to the unravelling of this other mystery which affects us all so vitally. Look! What is the Fenian commander up to now?"

From the position the two men occupied they could readily discern the movements of both the Canadian and Fenian forces, and they saw that the latter were now displaying sudden activity. Detachments were being hurried on the double quick from the woods in the extreme rear of the skirmish line and extended on the left flank. At the same time the firing on the Fenian line was accelerated.

But the Canadian commander evidently promptly interpreted Col. O'Neil's purpose to at-

tempt to turn the English right flank, and met the movement by immediately despatching the Caledonia Rifles, composing his rear guard, to extend and strengthen his endangered line. At the same time the Canadians continued to advance, firing rapidly, and to the anxious watchers on the ridge it appeared that the crash of actual contact must soon come and the thin line of the invaders be rolled up under the superior numbers pressing down upon them.

At this moment, when the certain result of the engagement appeared no longer in doubt; when the Fenian line wavered and seemed to be on the point of giving way entirely, a dozen horsemen dashed out of the woods on the Fenians' extreme right, just below where Grattan and Major Meredith were standing, turned their horses into the road by which the Canadian centre was approaching, and coming out into full view of the officers of the 46th, paused as if waiting for additions to their number.

The effect upon the advancing battle line was electrical. The English skirmishers, who had been preceding the main line but a short distance, creeping forward behind fences and through the thickly growing bushes, were seen to suddenly turn and run back upon the main body, while the long battle line itself began to contract and converge toward the centre.

"They're forming square to repel cavalry," cried Major Meredith, in high excitement. "Col. Booker is deceived, his mistake will prove costly

I fear. In ten minutes more the Fenians would have been on the run. Oh, what blundering !"

Promptly taking advantage of the apparent panic in the opposing force, Col. O'Neil ordered the charge, and the rugged veterans of his command, who had already fallen back of the Bertie road, instantly rallied and sprang forward with the rebel yell which had been heard on many a southern battle ground.

For a moment the Canadian officers strove desperately to reform their line. In doing this the skirmish line was evidently found to be too close to the reserves and the listeners on the high ridge heard the clear notes of a bugle sounding the retire. It was a fatal error. Hearing the retire order and seeing the reserves falling back, panic appeared to seize the troops on the left and they turned and ran in a confused manner to the rear. Seeing this the Canadian centre also wavered, and despite the heroic efforts of the officers to restore something like order in the ranks, appeared to be on the verge of breaking. The desperate charge of the Fenians, together with a volley which they half paused to fire after coming out into the open road, and which did considerable execution in the massed centre of the English line, proved too much for the brave college boys, and they began falling back, doggedly, but none the less certainly. But when it was discovered that the reserves had scattered and that the members of the Queen's Own were practically left alone to stem the oncoming rush of their assail-

ants, they too became disorganized and the retreat was turned into a rout.

But there was one exception. Watching the sudden turning of the tide of battle with breathless interest, Grattan and Meredith saw a solitary horseman spur out from the retreating, disorganized ranks, and regardless of the shower of bullets the Fenians were pouring with deadly effect upon the masses of frightened, hurrying men struggling in the narrow road, and with a wild cry of "charge" pealing from his lips, sink his spurs deep into the flanks of his animal, and gallop madly down the road directly in the face of the advancing, yelling Fenians.

"My God ! It's Upton ! He's going to his death !" cried Grattan, clutching Meredith's arm. "Can we do nothing to save him ?"

"Nothing !" was Major Meredith's equally excited reply. "We could not possibly reach him in time to aid him. Poor fellow, his fate is sealed. There, there he goes now !"

Another scattered volley had rung out from the muskets of the charging force, and as the smoke lifted, the anxious, eager watchers saw Lieut. Upton pitch forward upon the withers of his horse, clutch wildly and uncertainly at the empty air for support, and then fall headlong to the roadway.

At the same instant the horse was seen to rear madly and a scream of pain and mortal fear, which one who has heard can never forget, the death-cry of that most intelligent of animals, a

sound which serves to chill the stoutest heart, was borne to their ears.

Rearing itself upon its hind legs the animal, now as mad as its master had been, flung itself directly upon the advancing bayonets, the action being so sudden that the man directly before the frenzied horse was crushed down by the iron-shod hoofs. Then the line opened for the animal to pass through, but it had no more than passed the rear rank, when it swerved from its course, dashed blindly into the high rail fence flanking the road and fell in a heap, quite dead. Then, as the unchecked line of Col. O'Neil's force pressed on in rapid, deadly pursuit of the retreating Canadians, Grattan and Meredith saw two silent, motionless figures of human semblance lying there in the dusty highway.

Hotter and hotter became the fire of the pursuers and more rapidly the retreat of the thoroughly demoralized forces of Col. Booker. Gradually the tide of battle surged away in the direction of Ridgeway. All this time the Canadian officers exhibited great bravery, and but for that unexplainable panic which had seized their men; that moral fear which can best be compared to stage fright, the temporary advantage of the Fenian leader would have been speedily overcome. Vainly these officers strove to rally their men. Several times squads and even a company was collected, but never in sufficient force to check the pursuit, though frequently the fleeing troops paused, turned and delivered a scattered

volley at their pursuers, always however without result, for the guns were unaimed and the bullets sped far over the confident Fenians' heads.

But rapid as had been the retreat of the Canadians, they had been able to take with them their dead and injured, and as the roar of conflict rolled away in the distance, finally coming to their ears like a dull echo, and the last of the yelling cohorts of Sweeney passed out of view behind the distant woods in the direction of Ridgeway, only the two bodies of the stricken were observable in the blood splotted country road, that of Upton and the unknown Fenian.

As by common impulse the two men turned into the wood, procured their horses and rode silently down the gentle slope to the road.

Lieut. Upton had apparently not moved after falling from his horse. His sword was still firmly clutched in his death-rigid hand. He lay upon his side and at first no wound was apparent, but as Grattan bent over him and pityingly took his already stiffened fingers in his own, lifting the limp arm somewhat in doing so, a great stain in the green uniform directly over the heart, showed where the fatal bullet had entered.

"Poor fellow ! Poor, mistaken, impulsive, deluded boy !" cried Grattan, with almost a woman's tenderness. "He did not deserve to die like this. He was never half bad ; his weakness was his love for Marie and it proved his ruin. It is best that she should not know all, major.

Shall we not allow her to believe that his death came in the regular performance of duty?"

"Yes, that will be far better," was Meredith's quick reply. No good could come of telling her the details of this tragic ride. God, how his eyes glare, even yet! Perhaps it is best this way after all. There is no telling what the insane fancies of that weak brain might have led him to do, had he escaped the fate he went to meet."

"But we can't leave him here," said Grattan, arising and looking about him. "Let's carry the body to the farmhouse. The inmates will surely not refuse to allow us to leave the body in the barn until it can be removed for suitable burial. I shall notify his friends in Toronto as soon as I can reach a telegraph office. Or do you propose to rejoin the troops?"

"Certainly, as soon as possible."

"Then you might send a message from Stevensville. Of course the troops will make a stand as soon as they fall back upon Col. Peacocke's command."

"Yes, I can do that," returned Meredith. "if I get so far. My opinion is that if we were to remain here for a few hours we would see the Fenian army in more precipitate retreat than the volunteers have been. It was all the fault of the officer in command. He was frightened by the appearance of the horses into the belief that a cavalry attack was to be made. He might have known, he did know had he stopped to con-

sider, that they had no mounted troops. I must commend the volunteers for their excellent conduct under fire. No trained troops could have done better. You will, of course, return at once to relieve the anxiety which must be consuming the people at my uncle's house?"

"Yes, my mission is accomplished, though I should much like to accompany you to the Canadian lines."

With ready adaptation of themselves to circumstances the two men quietly selected two slender rails from the fence, broke boughs from the apple trees near the road and speedily improvised a rude litter upon which they tenderly placed the body of Lieut. Clifford Upton, taking off their own coats to cover the stiffened body.

It was only a short distance to the barn to which Grattan had referred, and thither they bore the lifeless form. The building stood on the opposite side of the road from the house, and they were obliged to pass the latter to reach it. There were no signs of life about the place. Doubtless the war cloud which had gathered so suddenly about them had been sufficiently terror-inspiring to drive the inmates to seek other shelter.

But the barn was not tenantless. Several wounded men reclined upon hay thrown upon the barn floor, and in one corner, covered with a blanket, lay two other indistinct shapes, which they felt to be mute evidence that the fire of the University boys had not been entirely harmless.

The wounded men were suffering from only minor injuries. They were chatting among themselves as Grattan and Meredith entered, carrying their ghastly burden, and paused in surprise at the intrusion, though interposing no objections.

"So we got one of the Britishers," one exclaimed as he noted the uniform upon the motionless body. "Say, pardner, what are the fellows doing?"

"Following up a temporary victory," was Grattan's reply. "But they're running directly into a large force of Canadian troops, and if any of them get back to Fort Erie they'll be far luckier than I think. If you chaps can travel, your safest way is to strike for the river and get out of danger as soon as possible."

"Oh, you can't frighten us," returned the soldier, "we wa'nt born yesterday."

"All right, you can't say I didn't warn you. You can't blame me when the redcoats nab you."

They placed Upton's body on the hay, further back in the barn than the place where the dead Fenians lay, secured another blanket and covered the soldierly form once more, after their handkerchiefs had been folded over his face. Then they went out from the barn, without another word, going down the road towards the point where they had tied their horses before performing their sad duty to Upton.

Soon they came to the motionless form of the Fenian who had been stricken down by Upton's horse, frenzied with its mortal wound. As

they approached, Grattan was attracted by the appearance of the body. It lay stretched at full length and some way there was a strange familiarity of outline. He stepped to the side of the motionless form, stooped down, turned the head slightly towards him, then sprang back with a hoarse cry. His own face had gone as white as that of the fallen Fenian, and Meredith's also became pale as Grattan exclaimed :

"Meredith, Meredith, come here quick, for God's sake ! The man is not dead and its George Merton—George Meredith—your father and Marie's !"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MYSTERY IS EXPLAINED.

In the Meredith homestead on that memorable second of June, the hours dragged slowly and anxiously. The inmates with straining ears had marked the recession of the firing, and instinctively accepted the gradually retiring sounds as evidence of Fenian success. Billy Wood had been able to explain the position of Col. O'Neil's force to James Meredith so plainly that he, thoroughly familiar with the lay of the country and the location of the various roads, was very well assured that the invaders must have been between the Canadiar troops and the Meredith home when the attack began, and consequently the moving further away of the musketry, could only signify that the Dominion forces were being driven back.

One thing alone had served to attract the attention of all from the exciting happenings along the Ridgeway road. That was the sudden mental lapse of Clifford Upton and the remarkable revelation he had made to Marie regarding Major Douglas Meredith.

At first, after the startling exhibition of frenzy in the summer house, Marie had given the matter little thought further than to set his statement down as the freak fancy of an insane man. But when, standing at the window of her

room, anxiously watching the disappearing form of Grattan, the matter had again come to her mind, she had turned suddenly to Rose and demanded :

"I thought you were my friend, Rose. Why did not you tell me that Major Meredith was my brother ?"

There was no help for it then, for Marie had fixed the girl's eyes with her strongly accusing gaze, and Rose could not escape. Even had she not answered, the quick flush and sudden start were evidence sufficient to Marie Meredith's quickened senses that, in this instance at least, Lieut. Upton had spoken truthfully.

"Simply, dear, because I promised him that I would not. It wasn't my fault. He had intended to visit you before he went to Toronto, but sudden orders prevented. It was really by accident I discovered the relationship, and then he urged me not to tell until he had seen you. I did so, and you wouldn't have me break my promise, would you—to him ?"

She blushed rosier than ever, as she completed the sentence, and glancing at her quickly, Marie detected an expression in the black eyes which she had never before seen there, and she held her peace.

But she had run down stairs, and had quickly related in breathless eagerness to James and Mrs. Meredith the wonderful information which had come to her, and they had not been nearly so surprised as she had imagined they would be.

for they had known that Douglas Meredith had gone into the army, and this coming to the Western world of a young, ambitious and venturesome young man of the Meredith race had not been such an unusual thing. Had not James Meredith done the same?

"Douglas Meredith should be a fine looking man, if he resembles his father," commented Mrs. Meredith, and her husband had supplemented:

"He does—looks exactly as George did at his age. I met Major Meredith in Toronto, briefly," he explained to his wife, "and I assure you the resemblance is something remarkable—so much so that I was attracted by it and came near remarking it."

"I do hope he will come to see us as soon as this terrible Fenian trouble is over," said Mrs. Meredith. "George, poor man, was quite fond of me, and I know I shall like his son."

So it came about that when some time later, Harold Grattan and Major Douglas Meredith, who had been led to postpone his return to the English army, rode rapidly into the lane, and handing their reins to Johnson, who had gone to meet them at their approach, and had sprung over the low fence, coming up to the house almost at a run, Marie had met them and had extended her hand to Major Meredith, saying with mock dignity, but with mischief-flashing eyes:

"Brother, you are welcome."

Then they had all laughed at the evident dis-

comfiture of the two men, but mirth had quickly given place to apprehension as Grattan had pushed to Mrs. Meredith's side, and had said rapidly :

"There has been a battle, and we have brought a badly injured man here, asking you to take him in. Dr. Norton is coming with his spring wagon, and we came on ahead so as not to needlessly alarm you, and to have a bed ready for him."

There was not an instant's hesitation on the part of the generous woman.

"I'll have a place ready for him in two minutes. I think we'd better have him carried right up stairs ; it will be quieter and better for him if he's badly hurt. James, come and help me."

"But Mrs. Meredith," interposed Grattan, "this man is a Fenian soldier—"

"As if that could make any difference. Isn't he a human being ? Bring him right up as soon as the doctor gets here and I'll have the bed ready."

So, on the stretcher which Dr. Norton had brought, the men carried the still senseless form up the broad stairs and into the large, airy bedroom to which Mrs. Meredith had directed them, and Marie and Rose had wondered at the grave concern which rested on the faces of their two brothers, unable to perceive the cause for such apparent anxiety over a stranger, and one of the

invaders at that, grievously injured though he might be.

And while below the two girls speculated on the probable reason why Major Meredith, a Queen's officer, should go so far out of his way to assist a wounded Fenian, while Billy Wood, from the open door of his room, catching a quick glimpse of the injured man as he was carried by, had recognized the stranger as the man whom he had been set to watch by Harold Grattan; upstairs in the cool chamber Dr. Norton, with professional coolness, was rapidly and carefully examining and attending the injuries of the victim of Upton's horse, while Meredith and Grattan with anxious faces, but helpful hands, were rendering every assistance in their power.

And then when the patient's rough clothing had been removed, and a suit of James Meredith's underwear, which fitted him wonderfully well, substituted,—when the ugly gash in the scalp had been sewed up, the iron grey hair being shaved away to make the operation possible, and the numerous other cuts and bruises resultant from contact with the mad brute's iron-shod hoofs, cleansed and bandaged, Dr. Norton had given the first intimation of what in his opinion would be the outcome.

"I think he's not fatally hurt; I believe we can pull him through," he said, in response to the eager enquiry of both. "His worst hurt is a quite severe fracture of the skull, in fact I may say that is the only serious feature of the case.

The other wounds are superficial. It wouldn't be a bad thing to have a nurse for him, some one person to attend him. There's Meredith's hired man, Johnson. He's a mighty good hand in a sick-room. Better have him come up and I'll leave my instructions with him. I think you told me that he has been afflicted mentally. Well now, I don't want to raise any false hopes, but I shall be surprised if that fractured skull doesn't prove a godsend to him. Don't be worried if he doesn't regain consciousness in a day or two. I'll be in again this evening, provided the Fenians don't hold me up, and I feel sure that within a week he will be on the road to recovery."

So Johnson was installed to attend the gray-haired stranger who had been one of Col. O'Neil's most outspoken haters of England, and there in the bedchamber of one of the Dominion's most ' ' supporters of the Crown, the fight for life began.

In the sitting-room below, an hour later, when the family reunion of the Merediths had been ratified in expressions of pleasure and satisfaction, Harold Grattan told them the story of his quest and its result, feeling that the sooner all mystery was swept aside and the truth laid bare, the better for all concerned.

"You are doubtless wondering," he began, "why Major Meredith and myself should be so strongly interested in the stranger we have brought here, soliciting the hospitality of your

home. Don't be surprised or startled at the improbability of what I am about to tell you. Can you endure a great shock, Mr. Meredith? This matter is one which affects you more nearly than you suspect."

"I am not easily excited," returned James Meredith, quietly. "You need have no fear to tell me anything."

"Very well, may I ask you, Mr. Meredith, how long it has been since you have heard from your brother in Scotland?"

"Fully three years," Meredith replied, "we have never corresponded very frequently."

"Did your brother in that last letter make any reference to your other brother George, who some eighteen years ago was confined in a private hospital conducted by a Dr. Judson, only a little distance from London?"

"No, he did not," said Meredith, a look of surprised enquiry coming into his face.

"Have you received at any time, from any source, information to the effect that George Meredith was no longer an inmate of the institution?"

"No, never. What is it that you are to tell me? That George is dead?"

"No, Mr. Meredith, not that he is dead, but that he is alive, and in America!"

"What? My father alive?" cried Marie Meredith, springing to her feet, for the first time realizing that this recital to which she had been listening with only ordinary interest, affected

herself even more than it did James Meredith. Then she turned with flashing eyes to her aunt : "You have always been kind to me ; why did you never tell me this before ? My father alive, while you and uncle both allowed me to believe him dead ? Oh, how could you do this cruel thing ?"

Tenderly Mrs. Meredith sought to reassure the girl, to explain the motives by which her husband and herself had been actuated in keeping her in ignorance of the truth.

"He was in reality dead to the world," she said. "We believed that the knowledge of his misfortune would only embitter your own life. We thought we were doing what was best ; can t you believe that, Marie ?"

"Yes, yes, it must be so," Marie returned, a sob in her voice. "But I should far rather have known—far rather have known !"

"It was very indiscreet of you to bring up this disagreeable subject, Grattan," said James Meredith with some asperity. "I should have supposed that a lawyer would have displayed more tact."

Marie, with quick resentment at the tone, would have answered, but her brother seized her arm and whispered the one word :

"Wait !"

There was a peculiar gleam in Grattan's black eyes as he turned their glance full upon the man who appeared always to condemn his every act.

"I regret that you are so hasty in your conclusions, Mr. Meredith," he said slowly. "I believed I was doing what was right. I am still so convinced. My action has had the full sanction and sympathy of Major Meredith, and he is the best judge. It is time that you yourself should know the full truth, so I must tell you that the injured man whom you have hospitably given shelter, is your brother. The patient Dr. Norton has just left is George Meredith, the father of Major Meredith and of Marie, your niece!"

For a full minute no one spoke. James Meredith and his wife gazed at Grattan in wonder and amazement, in speechless unbelief. Marie, sitting beside her brother, suddenly laid her hand upon his and looked up into his eyes with mute enquiry. She was surprised beyond power of expression. He simply nodded an affirmative. Rose watched Grattan in open-eyed amazement.

"Impossible!" at length said James Meredith, scarcely above a whisper.

"No, not impossible, not even improbable," returned Grattan, "but absolutely true. For three years I have been seeking to establish the identity and to find the man. Both have been successfully accomplished, and the task I set myself completed. I can tell you briefly the circumstances: One day in the office of a Buffalo newspaper I picked up a copy of the London Times. A name, that of George Meredith, attracted my attention. I had heard the history of your family and I suppose it was this fact which induced

me to read the item. It stated in effect that Mr. Meredith, once a prominent manufacturer of Manchester, who had been confined in Dr. Judson's hospital, had eluded his attendant and effected his escape. Search had been made in London and the surrounding country, but no trace of the fugitive had been found. It was believed, the article stated, that Meredith had succeeded in getting aboard a ship and had gone to America.

"As I say, my knowledge of your family history, and my own interest in Marie, led me to start an investigation, first to assure myself of the fact that George Meredith had come to America and afterward to find the wanderer and have him cared for. I did not think it advisable to impart my impressions or my determination to you, for I desired first to have some genuine information concerning your brother to impart. But to assist me in my search I did write to Wallace Meredith in Edinburgh and through him obtained not only the details of George Meredith's illness, a picture taken at the time he first became an inmate of Dr. Judson's institution, but also the address of your nephew here, who was at that time at Woolrich. I sent him a copy of the little notice cut from the London paper and asked his assistance in tracing the movements of his father in London, after quitting the hospital. A strange feature of the case was the fact that the proprietor of the asylum had never notified your brother that his patient was no longer with him, and when the major went to him for information

he was very ready to impart all he knew, suspecting troublesome explanations would be demanded, evidently if he failed to render what assistance he could.

"It is not necessary at this time to go into all the details of Major Meredith's search in London and my own in New York. It is sufficient that between the shipping offices of the two cities we found that a man fully answering the description of your brother had taken passage aboard an American liner in company with several adventurous spirits who on shipboard had expressed a determination to enter the army. We also learned subsequently from the captain of the ship that the man known as George Merton was a person of remarkable character, so peculiar as to attract the attention of the master, who had sought to cultivate his acquaintance, for the purpose of studying his characteristics, so different from anything he had ever before observed. Merton was, on nearly all subjects that might be brought up in his presence, a perfect recluse. People about him might be conversing on any subject, no matter of how general interest, and Merton would sit moody and silent, apparently oblivious to all that was going on about him ; but let reference to the war be made and he would suddenly become all attention, eager and enthusiastic. No other subject could move him. He appeared to have only one instinct—that of battle. It was a most remarkable fancy or freak of an insane imagination—as if the last impression

clearly impressed upon his brain, before his mind gave way under the strain of his bereavement, had been one of war, of military service. He found afterward that the last reading he had done before his mental condition was thought to be impaired, was Cromwell's wars. No one, not even the captain of the steamer, with whom Meredith became more communicative than with any other, was able to learn anything of his history. He seemed indeed a man without a past.

"We found that George Merton had enlisted in a New York regiment immediately on reaching this side, and thanks to my acquaintance with Gen. Sweeney, who was at that time a brigadier-general in the United States army, I was able to learn that Merton had been captured by the Confederates at Petersburg, had been taken to Richmond's Libby prison, had somehow impressed the officer in charge of the prison with his military ardor, and had succeeded in obtaining his release for the purpose of joining the ranks of his captors. He finally drifted into Gen. Kirkpatrick's command and was with it at the final surrender. During the entire period of his service on either side, he had been a conspicuous figure because of his recklessness in battle. That he escaped with his life is a miracle, and yet I believe he never received a serious wound. But perhaps I am tiring you?"

"No, no, go on," urged all in one breath.

"It is a most remarkable story," said James Meredith, "really beyond belief. But tell us all!"

"With the limited time at my disposal I continued the search after the close of the war, but it was not until the Fenian movement, which had as its object the invasion of Canada and the establishment here of an Irish republic, began to take tangible form, that I again obtained a trace of George Merton. That also was through information sent to me by Gen. Sweeney, the commander-in-chief of the Fenian forces then forming. From the story I had told him and from his own observation of the war, he too had become deeply interested ; and although at that time my own influence with Gen. Sweeney was somewhat impaired, he still gave me what assistance he could."

Grattan paused, looked about the circle of eager listeners, until his eyes rested upon Marie Meredith, then continued :

"There are some matters not affecting George Meredith, which must be explained—which I have promised to explain—and now is perhaps the proper time to do so. I desire to set myself perfectly straight before you all, and in order to do so, I must confess that I am in fact a member of the Fenian Brotherhood. Perhaps I may have been foolish to take the obligation, but I had three purposes in so doing : to lend my feeble assistance to the cause of Ireland ; to seek so far as lay in my power to prevent the great blunder of attempted invasion of a friendly state and to be in a better position to trace the movements of George Merton."

"Then you are a Fenian and an enemy of England!" exclaimed James Meredith, half angrily, with a triumphant glance at Marie.

But that incomprehensible young woman, seeing the glance and noting its expression, came promptly to Grattan's side and laying her hand on his shoulder, looked down into the eyes raised to her own with perfect trust and confidence.

"Go on," she said simply, and holding her close to him, Harold Grattan proceeded:

"I think, Mr. Meredith, that you misjudge me somewhat. As you undoubtedly may know, there are two branches of the Fenian Brotherhood. One is favorable to the plan originating with Gen. Sweeney, the other opposed. From the first I have opposed the notion of establishing, or rather the seeking to establish, an Irish republic on this side of the Atlantic. I have spoken on several occasions before the Hibernian societies in Buffalo and elsewhere, pleading Ireland's cause; but never without urging the utter absurdity and unwisdom of seeking to wrest Canada from Great Britain. It was this fact which was responsible for the coldness which came between Gen. Sweeney and myself. He was wrapped up in his ideas of conquest and thought that every Irishman should follow his lead. I believed I could see the certain consequence of such a reckless venture.

"But although he condemned my opposition to his plan, he did not entirely withdraw his assistance in tracing George Merton. He wrote me

frequently regarding the matter, and it was one of these letters which Clifford Upton—it was abstracted from my desk in Buffalo—sent to the Canadian government at Ottawa, and which was the sum total of the evidence upon which a warrant was issued for my arrest. Acting upon suggestions contained in these letters I went to St. Albans, Cleveland and other points where the Fenians were gathering, which accounts for my frequent absence from my office and apparent neglect of my business. But I felt that I should be well repaid for my time and effort if I could succeed in restoring George Meredith to his family or at least in having him returned to some suitable institution where proper medical attendance might possibly cure him of his malady.

"Through all the time that I have been following the slender clue picked up in the Buffalo newspaper office, I have been in frequent communication with Major Meredith, and it is, I think, owing to that search and its result that he is to-day on this side the Atlantic, and that Marie and her brother are united. There is nothing more to tell. Circumstances over which I had no control were interposed at the last moment to prevent my intercepting George Merton—Mr. Meredith—before he went into action with the Fenian force, which in his strange military frenzy he had joined, coming from some place in the South to Cleveland to do so. Let us hope that the consequences of that delay may prove how inscrutable are the ways of Providence."

Grattan ceased speaking, and glanced up at the fair girl beside him questioningly. For answer she stooped and kissed him, unblushingly, before them all. Then Rose Grattan, springing from her seat near Mrs. Meredith, ran to her brother and followed Marie's example, while Major Meredith looked on with envious eyes.

"You are a regular Vidocq!" cried Rose with sisterly pride.

"He has certainly followed the case with American persistence," observed Major Meredith, generously. "I must confess that I had little faith at first, but Grattan has proven his theory to my complete satisfaction. We have much to thank him for, far more than we can ever repay."

But Grattan, clasping the hand of the woman he loved, looked supremely content with the gratitude shining in her eyes.

Mrs. Meredith, in her motherly fashion, also joined the group about Grattan's chair and placed her hand kindly on his dark hair. The action was more significant than words. If the truth were known the sympathetic heart was too full to permit utterance. James Meredith alone appeared unwilling to bury his prejudices.

"But you admit, Grattan," he said argumentatively, "that you are a member of the Fenian Brotherhood. How can you reconcile your action as a subject of the Queen? It would appear that you really confess treason to the English government."

"Not at all," Grattan replied firmly. "For

a long time I have felt that I should be an ingrate indeed to refuse to become a citizen of the republic which has liberally contributed to my success in my profession. I am, in fact, as in appearance, a citizen of the United States."

Then, when a silence, breathless and oppressive fell upon the room, Rose Grattan, with a quick movement, threw one arm about the neck of her brother and the other clasping Marie, cried gaily :

"The triple alliance, England, the United States and Ireland, may it never be broken !"

"Hurrah !" came the faint voice of Billy Wood from the recesses of the adjoining bedroom.

"Didn't I tell ye Mr. Grattan's all right ?"

CHAPTER XX.

AND ALL ENDS HAPPILY.

A week had passed and the dreaded but abortive effort to establish an Irish Republic had failed. The wave of Fenian invasion had reached its highest point at Ridgeway, and had been broken into pieces against the wall of defence interposed by the Canadian Volunteers.

Finding himself in a most dangerous position, with his force reduced fully one-half by desertions, and well knowing that he was likely within a few hours at most to be surrounded, Col. O'Neil had beaten a hurried retreat to Fort Erie.

There had been a sharp but quickly decided skirmish at the village on the return of the Fenians to that point, where they found a small detachment of the Welland Battery and the Dunnville Naval Brigade, which had proceeded from Port Colborne by boat under command of Col. Dennis, drawn up in line on the dock.

This opposing force numbered little more than a half hundred men, and the engagement was brief, ending in a victory for the invaders, nearly all the Canadians being taken prisoners. In the mean time the Fenians had requisitioned more food, and their determination to hold out for reinforcements was strengthened by the confidence which came with a full meal.

Col. O'Neil fell back from the village to the old fort, taking along the prisoners captured, and immediately despatched a messenger in a small boat to inform the Buffalo leaders of the invasion movement that an army of 3,000 to 4,000 was advancing against him, but that if the Fenian forces had crossed the border at other points, he would remain in the old fort and make it a shambles, but that he would never surrender.

In Buffalo, when Col. O'Neil's messenger arrived, active efforts to rescue the intrepid O'Neil and his men were at once begun. Senator Gallagher and Secretary of War O'Dea offered \$1,000 for a tug to attempt to run the blockade of the United States warships. The price was tempting to one small tug owner, and taking a volunteer crew and making fast a Canadian scow lying in the harbor, the start was made.

Aided by the darkness of the night, which was intense, the tug with all lights out, succeeded in making the Fort Erie dock without accident. Harris, O'Dea's private secretary, volunteered to apprise Col. O'Neil of the efforts made for the rescue of himself and men. A horse was required to traverse the mile between the village and the old fort, and to obtain this the barn of United States Consul Blake was broken open and the animal taken out.

A window went up and a voice demanded angrily what the trespasser was doing, but Harris sprang to the back of the animal, swung

the halter strap to urge the horse to its greatest speed, and shouted recklessly :

"In the name of Ireland !"

Immediately on arrival of the messenger, who quickly dispelled any hope Col. O'Neil may have had of reinforcements, camp was broken, the Canadian prisoners set at liberty, and the march to the dock begun, determinedly, though there was no certainty that the heavy force of Canadians known to be approaching, would not intercept them before reaching that point. The rest is history. How the entire force succeeded in reaching the scow heroically brought for their use, and the start for the American shore began ; how they were intercepted by the vigilant Michigan, which had apparently been apprised of the plan of rescue, and had allowed it to proceed without interruption to the point where the force of Col. O'Neil was at its mercy ; the sufferings of the poor fellows for three days in that open scow under a boiling June sun before being transferred by the Federal authorities to the jail in Buffalo, have been fully chronicled by other writers. So also is the fact that the English Government with unheard of magnanimity, made no demand for the prisoners, and they were finally released, the United States Government furnishing them free transportation to their homes.

No one at this time attempts to justify the attack on Canada, but all must admit that never was an invasion of a foreign country conducted

with less injury to the non-combatants of the invaded country, for the men's orders were obeyed practically to the letter. Most of the men engaged in the ill-starred expedition were sincere in their purpose, honest in their hope for Irish liberty, no matter how chimerical the plan adopted really was.

In the Meredith household meantime, matters had been progressing most satisfactorily. Billy Wood's wound was healing rapidly, and he was being made a hero of by every member of the family, Betty Bowers not excepted, to such an extent that but for the lad's native good sense, he would have been utterly ruined for prospective legal preferment. He was now able to sit up, and Betty had quite naturally come to be his most faithful attendant.

Once she had referred to the incident in the cellar which had been the cause of considerable mental condemnation to the girl ever since she had obtained her first glimpse of Billy's white, drawn face when Mr. Meredith and Johnson had brought the senseless boy into the house the morning of that day so memorable in the Meredith household.

"Billy, I'm sorry that I pushed you into the buttermilk, really I am, and I wish you wouldn't lay it up against me," she had said contritely, and Billy had magnanimously replied, with something of the old merriment in his eyes which did her heart good to see :

"Huh ! Ye don't think I cared fer that, do ye ? I s'pose a gal has a right t' resent it when a feller she don't like tries t' kiss her."

"Why, Billy," she had answered hastily ; "you had no right to think that ; I never said I didn't like you !" and then blushing, she had run away to the kitchen, and Billy had not seen her again for what he thought an interminably long time.

To the Merediths and to Harold Grattan the hours which had passed since the wounded Fenian, George Merton, or George Meredith, as they all now knew him to be, was brought to the farmhouse, had been anxious ones. For three days Dr. Norton had been with the patient almost constantly, for the sick man had grown worse instead of better from the start, and the doctor's professional pride had been touched, and he had resolved that if he was forced to give the patient all of his time, the man should not die from lack of attention.

But on the morning of the fourth day the physician had taken a load off all their hearts when he had come down from his visit and had given them the positive assurance that not only would the sick man recover, unless some unforeseen complications arose, but there was strong reason to hope that the terrible blow from Upton's horse's hoofs would be the means of clearing his intellect.

"We must exercise extreme caution," the doctor had said, when bringing the pleasing, al-

most incomprehensible information to the family group below. "I am perfectly satisfied that Mr. Meredith now remembers the death of his wife, in fact all the circumstances of his life previous to being taken to the hospital. But the time intervening between that and the present is a total blank to him. I shall trust to your discretion not to mention the subject of his having been other than in his right mind, or say anything to him about his recent experiences, at least until such time as he shall have fully recovered, which may be some months. The fact that his son and daughter have grown to adult age must be carefully explained to him, and I think can be made plain without serious difficulty. While his mind will be clear and normal in condition, it will at the same time be impressionable like that of a child. Gradually he will be led to a knowledge of his affairs as they exist to-day. It is a wonderful case, the most remarkable with which I have met in nearly fifty years of practice. We once had a case in the hospital where I was on duty in London, somewhat similar to this, but in that case while the patient's reason was restored, he was simply a child. His entire past was forgotten. Mr. Meredith has simply to have filled in for him the period between the time he became deranged and the present. I think you," turning to James Meredith, "had better go up with me this afternoon, and that you undertake the task of enlightening him on what has occurred during his

mental lapse. You will need to have patience and tact, but if these are properly employed, within a month you should really be a reunited family."

"Couldn't I go to him, doctor?" pleaded Marie. "I feel that I shall love him as a daughter, and I am so anxious to be doing something for him."

"Not yet, Miss Marie, not yet. All that will come in good time, but if we would not have bad results we must be patient. Better not let anyone except your uncle see him for a time. In a week, two weeks, a month, if he should ask for his children, after Mr. Meredith has prepared him to look for them full grown—not till then; it is the only safe way to make the matter quite clear to his restored understanding."

So, in the afternoon, James Meredith had gone to the sick chamber and Dr. Norton, after taking his patient's hand and asking how he felt, receiving a weak but lucid answer, had remarked:

"Well, Mr. Meredith, I've brought you a visitor. Your brother, James, has come to see you. He's been very anxious about you, for you have been very sick. Do you know him?"

And then James Meredith had taken a seat on the edge of his brother's bed and had taken the invalid's thin hand in his own strong palm, fighting manfully to keep back the rising tears, and George Meredith had answered:

"Yes, this is brother James, but it seems as

though you've grown old since I saw you. Have you, too, been ill?"

That interview had been a brief one, but it had assured James Meredith that Dr. Norton's theory was well founded, and when he had communicated his impressions to the others of the family, a great load of doubt and suspense was lifted from their hearts and if ever prayers of thanksgiving went up from the Meredith family altar, it was that night.

"Really, I believe I shall always have a warm place in my heart for Gen. Sweeney," said Marie Meredith, as she and Grattan were alone in the parlor, she sitting in a low chair, he standing with his elbow resting upon the mantle, looking down into her upturned face with admiration and something far stronger in his dark eyes.

"Why are you partial to the general?" asked Grattan playfully, "I thought you rather disliked Fenians?"

"I wish you wouldn't speak that way," she said with a fine show of irritation. "You know I have buried my prejudices to quite an extent. I begin to see that while they were terribly mistaken in their methods their purpose had an element that must command respect. But that isn't all. To us the Fenian invasion has been a blessing in disguise, for has it not brought me a father and a brother?"

"And changed your doubts—"

"Of you? Yes, into perfect trust and confidence."

Then he had quitted his station at the mantle and had just bent his six feet of stalwart manhood to touch with his own the red lips so temptingly offered, when the door opened and there was a hurried scramble of a flushed specimen of masculinity and a deeply blushing maiden to regain an attitude of decorum, as Major Douglas Meredith strode unceremoniously into the room. He had just returned from Fort Erie and brought the intelligence that the raid was ended and the Canadian soldiers entrained for home.

Then they had hastened to acquaint him with the good tidings from the sick room and the restrictions imposed by Dr. Norton, and he had come forward without a trace of backwardness and had taken Marie in his arms with all the playful familiarity of a brother and had held out his hand to Grattan with prompt gratitude, exclaiming :

"No one but you could have done it, and I'm glad and proud to call you brother, if you are a Fenian !"

Then, releasing Marie and glancing somewhat anxiously about the room, as in search for someone, he had asked, while his own color deepened :

"Where's Miss Grattan ?"

"I saw her going toward the grape arbor only a little while ago. I think you'll find her there," returned Marie, and when he had uncere-

moniously rushed out with much of a boy's enthusiasm, and Grattan looked into Marie's eyes enquiringly, she had answered his mental telegraphic message promptly :

"I hope so ; I know that she loves him."

THE END.

